

THE WIRE

THE WIRE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

WWW.THEWIRE.CO.UK ISSUE 216 FEBRUARY 2002 £3.30

Back from the void

RICHARD HELL

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Joëlle Léandre
Music's lunatic
fringe

Keith Rowe in Central Africa
Maxime De La Rochefoucauld
Rhythm And Sound
Gary Lucas on Florian Fricke
Keiji Haino's all night flight
Laub
Lydia Lunch
Fog



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Jim O'Rourke Insignificance
ly/d out now on domino



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Editor's Idea

Words are our currency as much as sounds, and as *The Wire* enters its 20th anniversary year, a hell of a lot of them have flowed under the bridge since the magazine's foundation. Whenever I read that someone is 'utilising' a guitar rather than using one; that they have 'committed something to tape' instead of recorded it; that they are an 'art practitioner' instead of just an artist; or that their first self-titled attempt on the hearts and minds of the public is 'eponymously titled'; whenever I read that someone is 'woodshedding', that they are 'peeling off licks', or 'committing something to tape', where that something happens to be their latest 'outing', I reach for my red pen. But the thing that makes me call up a priest, order the last meal and slip on the blindfold, is what a certain world leader might call 'overstatisation'.

The poor old President, with his transformationalings and his misundereatinings and his logic behind the rationale, is the most public offender of the moment. But let's not pretend that any of us, even those who contribute to these pages, are guilt free. Dealing with complex and difficult music, trying to walk the line between trying its mystery speak for itself and opening

it out to readers who haven't actually experienced or heard it at first hand, is bound to lead to a critical language that occasionally makes the umpires of sensory 'Out'. Academic New Media troublespeak makes writing about music highly, er, problematic. Music raises intelligent questions elegantly, and should be addressed and written about in the same spirit and register, but where the dialectic takes over and starts erasing fact, there we must draw the line. Last year I received an invitation to speak at an Austrian conference on the relationship of visual and video art with digital music and sound. Unfortunately I couldn't decode the invitation. Here's a sample paragraph: "What manifests itself as cultural process, shows itself also in the form of a systematic change. After the orientation of the new art towards music, the digital world effectuates the transgression of the mechanistic; the dominating 'sight of things' disappears: the 'auditory logic' is at least added, the sound as mediating, mediat 'visionary' - a productive paradoxon." Well, would you have gone?

This month's issue focuses on several musicians whose contributions have been hugely significant, but

because they have chosen to remain below the radar since, they have gone relatively unrecognised. Memory tends to be enshrined only in product these days: if you're not on the shelves you ain't going nowhere. So Gordon Mumma's pioneering live electronics now appear with wonderful freshness and his example appears to offer one solution to the problems faced by static computer musicians. The hovering intensity of the late Florian Fricke's Werner Herzog soundtracks stand as a solid epitaph, even though his latterday reputation and recent low-key releases had become diffuse. And Richard Hell, the punk iconoclast whose song "Blank Generation" produced The Sex Pistols' "Pretty Vacant" by as much as two years, seemed to have expended all his adrenalin on music, turning his hand instead to writing literature and making or appearing in films.

But just to prove there's life beyond words, from this month we introduce a new 'comic' strip inked by our artist in residence, that very productive paradoxon Savage Pencil. You'll find it, opening up the Directory, on page 92.

ROB YOUNG



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The Wire published 11 times a year by The Wire Magazine Ltd
 Printed by B Press, Ltd, Reprinters by SP Corbin

Wholesale agents and UK distributor: SP Corbin
 USA: The Wire (ISSN 0952-0686 USPS 960321) is published monthly by The Wire Magazine Ltd
 London E1 7SA, UK. The Wire Magazine is registered with the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) Transactional Reporting Service (TRS) at 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, USA. For all other countries, contact The Wire Magazine Ltd, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA, UK.

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Subscriptions (see page 90)

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 info@thewire.co.uk
 www.thewire.co.uk

RATES (12 issues)
 UK £39
 Europe £50
 USA/Canada \$165/€150
 Rest of World \$20/Aus\$200 Surface

Adventures In Modern Music

Issue 216 February 2002
£3.30
ISSN 0952-0686 (USPS 006231)

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Images Amy A. Tanager, Frank Baur, Nigel Bennett, Hannah Brown, Mathias Ek, Oily Hewitt, Tim Kent, Simon Leigh, Sebastian Meyer, Non-Format, Savage Pencil, Michele Tuma, Eva Vervand, Johnny Volcano, Jake Walters, Wandy

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 COMING/SENDING/US/UK
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Bitstream

News and more from under the radar.
Compiled by The Trawler

gone but not forgotten: Gareth Williams (left) with This Heat

Health and deficiency: **Gareth Williams**, This Heat's keyboard player and bassist, died of complications from cancer on the morning of 24 December 2001, aged 48. Williams was a member of the British avant rock group from 1976 until they broke up in 1981. After This Heat disbanded, Williams extensively studied South Indian dance and music, and released a limited edition cassette in 1985, *Flaming Tunes*. A memorial concert is to be held in London this month: see *Out There*. We are also sad to report that **Juan García Esquivel** went off to relax in the great space age bachelor pad in the sky on 3 January. The Mexican *muchacho* of exotica was 83 years old and died after a succession of strokes he suffered in October and December +++ **Holy Cowell: Essential Cowell: Selected Writings On Music** By **Henry Cowell**, a collection of the "tone cluster" composer's writings on music theory and history as well as reviews and interviews edited by Flusar member Doug Higgins, will soon be published by McPherson & Co. If you happen to be in upstate New York on 23 February, there's a launch party at Deep Listening Space in Kingston, with discussions and performances from Kyle Gann, Richard Teitelbaum and Sorel Hays +++ A stitch in time: This month New York's venerable avant venue, the **Knitting Factory**, celebrates its 15th anniversary with a month-long schedule of performances. Ten per cent of the box office receipts will go to the Music For Youth Foundation. Info at www.knittingfactory.com +++ Bluejeans and moon beams: As part of the Kail's celebrations, the **Captain Beefheart Project** will honour the contributions of Don Van Vliet on 9 February. The event will play host to the American debut of Fast 'N' Bubious, the instrumental tribute group featuring

guitarist Gary Lucas and conducted by Philip Johnson, a screening of rare footage of Beefheart And The Magic Band, and *The Win's Mike Barnes* reading from his celebrated Beefheart bag (which is due to be published in the US by Cooper Square Press) +++ On Cecilia: The British Library's map of the UK's music resources went online on 11 January. The database, called **Cecilia**, includes information on printed music and audio collections, concert programmes and memorabilia, autographed scores, archives of jazz and popular music, and collections of musical instruments. Check the site at www.bl.uk +++ Soul collision: Two of experimental dancefloor electronica's biggest names re-emerge this spring with new albums. The third installment in **Thomas Brinkmann's** Soul Center series of recontextualised funk and soul records will be released on 25 March on Novamute. The two previous Soul Center albums came out on Brinkmann's own W&B Enterprises label. Meanwhile, **Super Collider**, aka Cristian Vogel and Jamie Ledell, are back with their trademark "If George Clinton and Kraftwerk were stuck in an elevator full of molasses with only a sequencer for company" sound after an almost three year hiatus with a new album, *Raw Digits*, set to be released in May on their new label, *Rise Robot Rise* +++ UPGICIOUS: **Iannis Xenakis** composed four pieces of electroacoustic music using the UPIC (Unité Polyagogique Informatique du CEMAMU), a machine that allowed music to be composed through the act of drawing, two of which can be found on *Musique Electro-Acoustique*, a new release from Focal, which unearths the composer's *Persepolis* in 2000. *Pour La Paix* is a previously unreleased, 26 minute work concerning the horrors of war, completed in 1981;

Voyage Absolu Des Universiers Andromède, meanwhile, was first performed on 1 April 1989 at the Koyamasa Honotokuji Temple in Himeji, Japan for the opening ceremony of the International Exposition of Paper Kites +++ Award tour: Korean composer and komanga virtuoso **Jin Hi Kim** has recently won two prestigious prizes for her work. Kim received the John Cage Award for Music Composition (an unrestricted \$24,000 grant) from the Foundation for Contemporary Performance Art and the Wolf Ebermann Prize from the International Theater Institute for her multimedia performance *Dong Dong Touching The Moon* +++ Immeasurable equations: *Phaëlos Books* has recently published *Sun Ra Collected Works Vol 1: Immeasurable Equation*, which includes the bulk of Sun Ra's 1972 treatise on philosophy, mathematics, the cosmos and poetry, *Immeasurable Equation II: Extensions* Out, as well as an essay by the book's editor, Adam Abraham (son of Alton Abraham, who ran Ra's label, Saturn Research), photos and unpublished art work. More information is available at www.phaëlos.com. There are even more stargings in the Sun Ra cosmos, as Peter Hinds's *Sun Ra Research* zine publishes its annual compendium, *Sun Ra Book 2003*, in March. More info at www.sunraesearch.com +++ Freddie Frith ate my hamster. Guitar improviser **Fred Frith's** out of print back catalogue originally released by the Shinn label, *Reo Rec*, will be available again on a new imprint from *Reo Rec* Megacorp, *Freddie Records*. First out of the box in February will be his classic *Gravity* and the new *Accidental* (Music For Dance Volume 3). Other material scheduled to be released includes records by *Skeleton Crew* and *Massacre*. Info at www.reomegacorp.com. □

Death Row

How would Lydia Lunch spend her last day on Earth?

You are allowed...

Three records

Wellness, please. The sounds of my own thoughts ricocheting around my cerebral cortex would draw out my symphony, for no matter how long I live, or how soon I die, I will still be arguing for justice, screaming for equality, protesting war and celebrating my life

The film

A video projection of my last breath draining from my lips, as I blow a kiss to whatever awaits

The book

A blank notebook, scribbling illegible and mysterious messages filled with the poetry of death and longing

Three visitors

A visitor passes to my deathbed. By that time I will be so sick of human beings that the greatest gift they will afford me is their absence

Last meal

Grilled baby octopus, artichoke hearts, crab claws, lobster tails, asparagus and belladonna

Final message for the world

Stop Wasting Your Time. Do it Yourself. Don't be so damn selfish. Recognise how fucking spoiled you are. Quit whining. Get real. Appreciate every single second. Throw away the remote controls. Stay off the Internet. Go read a fucking book. Leave me out of it.

Music for the funeral

No funeral, thanks, save the plot of land, build an orphanage, launder my body, insert voicebox, blast Gorecki, Penderecki and The Stooges' first two albums. Pray for the living □ Lydia Lunch's *Champagne, Cocaine And Nicotine Stains EP* is out this month on Crappled Dick



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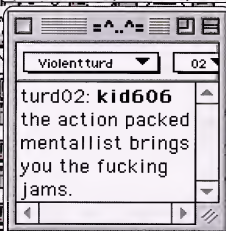
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AGF

EMOTIONAL CODEBREAKER.

BY PHILIP SHERBURNE

Thanks for the sharing: Laub's Antye Greer-Fuchs

In the autumn of 2000, Antye Greer-Fuchs – the singer and co-producer of the German group Laub – was in San Francisco for a solo performance and lecture at the Rooms For Listening festival. While strolling through the city with friends, a street musician approached her looking for a dollar or two, and began reciting rhymes. Antye listened politely. Then, unfazed, she blasted back with her own freestyle, in her native tongue, wrapping her characteristically hushed, guttural syllables around the cadences of American HipHop. The street musician walked away with a couple of bucks, but there was little doubt the German singer had won the battle. A few days later, when Antye breathlessly expounded her love of boxing, showing off wry biceps that could easily trounce the average music journalist, another aspect of her quietly combative nature fell into place.

Fast forward to October 2001, where Antye is gearing up for a very different kind of engagement. The London Sinfonietta is set to perform the work of Glaswegian composer Craig Armstrong, known for his arrangements for artists like Massive Attack and Madonna, in a Stockholm tribute to the Barbican. If this weren't unusual enough, Armstrong – "a big fan of Laub, for some reason", according to Antye – has asked the group's frontwoman to sing in his piece. Her response to the composer's lush orchestral arrangements is a deadpan reading of HTML script and fragments of German and English text, a sort of cyborg counterpart to his neo-romantic excess. The Barbican is a radical change of venue for an artist accustomed to playing in clubs and cafes, and as the conductor introduces Antye to the members of The Sinfonietta, the self-trained artist experiences an unfamiliar attack of stage fright. "I'm used to playing in pop bands, and with non-speaking Techno guys,"

Antye recalls thinking, "There's no way I'm going up on stage without my computer." And so she packs her Powerbook under her arm, props it open and proceeds to read the text for her performance directly off the screen, contributing a strangely detached human voice to the swelling strings around her.

Now, for *Head Slash Bauch*, her solo debut as AGF on San Francisco's Ortholog Musork label, Antye has extended the conceit into an album, recording herself reading lines of code and then deconstructing them into a sludge of broken syllables and bursts of breath. At first there's no "sense" distinguishable in the 22 short tracks, discrete constructions that flow into each other like water through a series of lock gates. But as you listen further, the familiar language of tech support begins to bubble up: "Readme file", "bugfix", etc. It's the first time that Antye has written lyrics – if you can call them that, folded as deeply as they are into the structure of the music – in a language other than German, but she says the move was natural, especially after a few years of immersing herself in digital sound software. "I've been reading so many manuals that I just started thinking and talking like this," she says. "Everybody's doing it, really, talking about humans as if they were computer systems." The songs on Laub's new album, *File Sharing*, reflect her more traditionally emotive lyric style, presenting highly charged images – two lovers riding a moped through fields of lavender, for example – in spare, tight German verses. But the *Head Slash Bauch* tracks mirror another type of everyday language for many: that of technology and computers. "I always mix the two: I'm used to living in two languages," she says. (Indeed, she's speaking from Finland, where she's holed up to record with Ambient/Techno producer Vladislav Delay, having wrapped up the Laub album a few months

earlier.) "I'm reading manuals, I talk to friends in English and German alike, I'm not bothered by it – it's not something I decided to do." So for the AGF record, she treats language as an object both banal and radically strange, by "just listening to sound". And, indeed, on *Head Slash Bauch*, her approach strips much of the "language" out of music as well, choosing instead to focus on fluid abstractions that dissolve their structure at every turn.

"Before, I worked within a frame," explains Antye of the process behind the record. "With AGF, I didn't care about accessibility. I wanted to do short pieces, not like a ten minute Ambient massacre, but lots more pieces, very close to one another. It came from playing live so much. For a year before I started recording, I had been playing and experimenting live, not aggressively but always looking for my own sound, and during that time I collected lots of material. I had all these pieces that happened more or less along those travels, and when I put together the album, I thought it would be good to keep them short."

"The borders in pop music are very rigid – things have to be in time, in a specific structure," she continues. "Even with Laub" – a group that embodies a sort of experimental pop sensibility – "we tried to break that, but pop is still very predictable. I didn't want to care about form or harmony or time signature – I didn't want to think about it. I just wanted to create sounds." It sounds like a naive approach, but the paradox of *Head Slash Bauch* is that there is a kind of logic submerged in the music. It's a nonverbal one, however, despite the fact that the tracks are quite literally marked up with text, scraps of a life lived on both sides of the display screen. □ AGF's *Head Slash Bauch* is released on Ortholog Musork. Laub's *File Sharing* is out now on Kitty-Yo



Letters

members of the group a very long time ago puts you in a position to deliver judgment? You may also have gone to school with someone who later became, say, a milkman – does that qualify you as an expert on the dairy industry? Namedropping is elitism, too.

I also asked why Radiohead, but not Björk, should have been targeted for abuse. Richard replies that a comparison of their music is a complete mismatch. Of course it is. I wasn't writing about musical styles, but about the similarities of their career paths, status and creative approaches. My question remains valid.

Next, he explains that I might not understand the subject because he gets the feeling that I would have been reading *Select* magazine in 1993. It is pure elitism to attempt to belittle someone because they do not happen to share your taste in magazines. For the record, I know nothing of *Select*, and at the time of my alleged style crime I was bedridden and too seriously ill to read anything at all. Think a little before you make lazy assumptions.

Constructive criticism is always fine, but letters like Richard's tell us nothing about music and succeed only in revealing the sour side of the writer's nature. If you don't like someone's music, fine – look elsewhere. There are many other delights on offer. Better still, why don't you make your own? (and wait for the belittling...).

Pete Markham York, UK

The Radiohead correspondence is now closed – Ed

Poetic license

In David Keenan's article on Mercury Rev (*The Wire* 214), American poet Robert Creeley is characterised as a "New Englander associated with such 'language' poets as Ed Dorn and Charles Olson". The recently deceased Dorn would have been appalled with the appellation 'language' poet. The long dead Olson would have had no idea what the term means. Robert Creeley is, indeed, a New Englander associated with Black Mountainers Olson and Dorn; however, the so-called 'language' school comes into play a few decades later in the unfolding story of contemporary American poetry. It's a minor point, but your magazine is so scrupulous in its attention to detail that I thought I might as well bring it to your attention. The funniest part is imagining what Dorn would have said about being identified as a 'language' poet, a movement he made fun of.

Bill Borneman via email

Cardew: no fun?

Re: the Cornelius Cardew article (*The Wire* 214). Yes, Cardew's early achievements are worth writing about, but I think it's a shame he renounced the avant garde. You can't be avant garde or even just weird because it

doesn't conform to Socialist doctrine? Did you ever listen to the absolutely joyless and stodgy music of his post-experimental work? It's just like church music. I might be cruel in saying this, but I can think of better martyrs than Cardew.

Lawrence J Patti Rochester, USA

I'm surprised the Cardew article didn't list his book *Stockhausen Serves Impressionism* in the bibliography. It lays out his political ideas clearly, and although it's no longer in print, it is available in libraries.

Bill Milazzo Chicago, USA

We listed material that is currently available. Cardew's work was referred to elsewhere in the article – Ed

Point of order

Richard Henderson's Primer on the Music Of Islam (*The Wire* 214) referred to Byrne & Eno's 'My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts', which prominently sampled the Lebanese mountain singer Dunya Yusa'. That is indeed the name by which that album's sleeve referred to the vocalist, but the *Music In The World Of Islam* LP from which they taped the vocals gave it as 'Dunya Yusa'. It would be nice to believe that another spelling variation has caused other recordings of that incredible voice to be misfiled in some obscure museum of ethnography, but so much for wishful thinking.

In the same issue, Biba Kopf showed good taste in his review of the book *Verschwende Deine Jugend* by making special mention of Chrislo Haas's contribution to electronic new wave, but he implies that Haas has been silent ever since. In fact a new album, *Low* (credited simply to Chrislo), came out on the Tresor label a couple of years ago.

Kavin Busby Birmingham, UK

Techno arabesque

Two small points about *The Wire* 214...

In his introduction to *The Primer*, Richard Henderson describes the "shared attributes" of the music of Islam as "the penchant for abstraction... lack of individuality... repetition and symmetry; and arabesque". It struck me as being the exact definition of Techno. (The 'arabesque' label perhaps less obvious, but check 'psyl-cosyn', the fifth track on Black Dog's *Spanners* album from 1995.)

And don't you think Björk looks strikingly like Michael Jackson in the photo on page 87?

Nicolas Schoener Paris, France

Psyched out

Is it just me, or does someone at your mag have a bias against British psychedelia? In *The Compiler*, the

Muggles II box (*The Wire* 210), *Acid Drops...* (212), and the *British Psychedelic Music* collection on Normal Records (214) were summarily dismissed with a sneer. Granted, not everything on those collections is fantastic, but there is some great stuff. It makes me think the reviewer didn't even really listen to them. The reviewer dismissed the Muggles II box as a bunch of careerists. Most of the bands probably had one or two which disappeared early after release. What careerists! As for the collection on Normal, I haven't heard it yet, but the line-up looks interesting. Mark Fry is on it, and his disc from 1972 is one of the best acid folk/psych rarities I've ever heard. Instead of continuing to give the type of music to the same person, could you please give them the latest fumble-fingered, endearingly naive Japanese twiddle, which will undoubtedly make them infinitely more happy, fulfilling their quest for a vague sense of 'other'.

James Kramer via email

Down with the Kid

After reading the Kid606 article (*The Wire* 212) my impression of him is one of a naive, self-absorbed kid. He discredits anything and/or anyone that is unlike himself, which is ignorant in my opinion. Just because things aren't a certain way for him doesn't mean it's invalid, it may be totally valid for someone else. He acts like he knows it all at age 22. He did have some good points, but mainly he came across as someone who cares about their image but tries to act like they don't; a 'scenester'.

Don Winblad San Diego, USA

Corrections

Issue 215 In 2001 *Rewind*, the reissue of p-Zig's *Tango N°1* (Veefr GO was mistakenly credited to Planet Mu. In fact, Repleux was responsible for both the reissue and the original release.

In Print Run, the title of Piero Heliczer's book of collected poetry was reproduced incorrectly. It is actually called *A Purchase In The White Boat*.

In the Directory, the wrong contact for Hot Air was printed. The correct details are: F 0161 832 7991, info@mpisampling.com, www.smpisampling.com. D Cargo, Baked Goods, Junior Meat Recordings' old details were also included by mistake. The new details are: Unit 75A, Regent Studios, 8 Andrews Road, London E8 4QN, info@autogoborn.f9.co.uk, www.autogoborn.f9.co.uk.

Issue 213 In the Jim D'Rourke article, Brise-Glace's *When in Vantaa...* and Yona-Kit's *Yona-Kit* were mistakenly referred to as being deleted. Both titles are still available from Skin Graft which is now distributed through Shellstock. ☐

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Bite

About 15 years ago, a 23-year-old Andrew Broder might have been sitting alone in his shitty apartment, nursing a Bud, inhaling mould spores, watching the silverfish crawl across the window sill, half paying attention to Larry Zyzszo putting an arm bar on Stan "The Lariat" Hansen on the television while listening to Sisters Of Mercy and fellow Minnesotans Husker Dü and The Replacements. Today, however, 23-year-old Andrew Broder still sits alone in his shitty apartment, nursing a Bud, inhaling mould spores, watching the silverfish crawl across the window sill, half paying attention to The Rock delivering the People's Elbow to Kurt Angle on the television while listening to Smog, a Beat Junkies mixtape and fellow Minneapolisians Eyedea and Abilities. Instead of dressing his post-adolescent bedst blues in black lipstick and an army surplus trenchcoat, Broder gives this age-old condition a defiantly 21st century spin — cool enough to wear flat laces and a Rawkus skull, but still nerdy enough to need the security of a cardigan.

As Fog, Broder has just released what may very well become a defining musical statement among disgruntled twentysomethings of a certain musical and intellectual disposition. Fog's self-titled debut album for Ninja Tune is, along with the prodigious output from the Anticon crew, perhaps the first album to link the 'been there, done that' multi-musicality of the jaded PoPoWo art set to a fairly explicit social, psychological and maybe even political statement. Pissed off with the world and his place in it, he uses the muck and blasé attitude of the contemporary music scene to heap scorn on it.

Broder grew up in suburban Minneapolis and spent his early adolescence in "NORXy sounding [punk groups]. Very silly, jokey kind of shit. I was in a band called Shamspoop for a while. If that gives you any idea. It was straight edge. Totally dumb, but really, really, really fun... Seeking adventure and identity —

things absent in my suburban doldrums... I started Oling and doing graffiti."

Although HipHop was a diverting escape from the life white 'bubs, after five or six years as a fully paid up member of the HipHop underground (including his role as part of the editorial team of a laugh-out-loud HipHop/graff/roadkill satire zine which I'm not allowed to name because it has nothing to do with his music, but it has the same initials as a very well-known drug), Broder got sick of the orthodoxy and ditched his backward baseball cap and backpack. "I don't mean to be this 'I hate HipHop' guy," he says, "but I don't want what I do to be seen as reactive. I want it to be proactive. That's why so much underground music is lousy, because it is reactive and self-conscious. So much of it focuses on what it is not, not what it is. I hope to be as far away from that as possible... In very basic terms, music is about telling your story, and a lot of turntable music, while aesthetically interesting and quirky, isn't the kind of music that I can identify with. It doesn't really speak to me on any level beyond 'that's an interesting noise'. So, you know, if we're gonna try to take all this turntable shit seriously as an instrument, not just a novelty, then we have to think in terms of making music tell a different story, one that is not 'I am a good scratcher, check me out'. Which is sort of the HipHop/DJ battle kind of way of looking at things. That stuff is great and inspiring, but it's sort of like figure skating... Is my turntable playing based in HipHop? Yes. Do I think I am HipHop or do I care if HipHop heads, specifically, are into my music? Not really. The song "And Stay Out" is partially about the whole fitting into HipHop thing."

"And Stay Out" pretty much sums up Fog in a nutshell. Beginning with elegiac piano chords, an Alberta Caper of a scratch and a dusty, whining test tone, Broder sings in the most perfect of indie voices, "We've been trespassing but now we're through." The

song then proceeds to descend into a deconstruction of a HipHop beat like a more primitive Rhythm And Sound. The rest of the album finds Broder collaborating with Anticon's Oese One (who gives a shout-out to "all the quitters"), creating frostbitten atmospheres from his turntable and dotting this tundra with fragments from the daydream nation: the acoustic guitar part of "Pneumonia" is strangely reminiscent of Sonic Youth's "Schizophrenia" and the guitar samples on "Fool" definitely take the Xpressway to yr skull. "I'm very 'first-take'," he says of the album's creation. "A lot of the songs just started by doing some drums or some noise and then building the songs around that... But as far as moods and images, I always look at that as something that will surface no matter what as long as the sounds you make are coming from a pure place. Even if the structure of a song isn't fully defined when you start making it, by the time you finish, it will become apparent. Like, I'll do a drum pattern on the turntables and then a month later write a guitar part or words that fit it perfectly, down to the measure, and I'll think to myself, 'That must have been meant to happen' or maybe it was in my head all along, it just all didn't realise itself at the same time, but it was always there. But the mood, image, idea and sound are the most important things, not the tools you use to create them."

The pervading moods of Fog is bleak, frigid and desolate. "Well, the winters here are really hard for me so that's produced some things to write about I suppose," Broder concludes. "My friend Chaka said something which I thought was right on, to the effect of Minneapolis just kind of keeps you running around in circles. There are wonderful people here and for its size there is, at times, a lot of good shit going on musically. But most people I know speak often of leaving. And I think those ideas of escape and/or boredom come across in what I write as well." □ Fog is out this month on Ninja Tune



MAXIME DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD



'Members' of Maxime De La Rochefoucauld's Automates orchestra

"My music is not so much polyrhythmic as polygravitational," says Canadian composer Maxime Rioux, aka Maxime De La Rochefoucauld, of his mechanical orchestra of self-built "automates", whose interlocking actions accumulate into ritualistic, trance-like rhythms described by their creator as "creating chaos with an order". When I reach Rioux's apartment for our interview, he tells me he only woke up five minutes earlier, but already his attention is transfixed by the tiny gadget he's fiddling with. It turns out that it's a component scavenged from the inside of an office thermostat – a Honeywell thermostat, to be exact. "A friend just gave this to me; they're very hard to find," he enthuses, like someone who's just stumbled onto a Shakespeare Folio. To the uninitiated it looks just like a thin spring with a mercury-filled glass bubble attached to one end. After ten minutes of explanation, during which Rioux repeatedly rocks the mercury back and forth inside the bubble to demonstrate something or other, I'm no closer to understanding exactly how this device will bring a technological quantum leap in his music. But given the importance of such electronic minutiae to his work, I'm prepared to believe him.

New Yorkers get a rare firsthand glimpse at the fruits of Rioux's obsession during the Montreal-based composer's recent residency there, when he put on a series of performances of his ongoing project, Automates KI, at various venues in the city. The "Automates" (French for automata) are an army of tiny robot-instruments rigged up in an impossibly complex tangle of wires, stands, beaters and primitive mechanical arms. Going out as Maxime De La Rochefoucauld, Rioux drives this array of soundmakers using simple, ultra low frequency (that is to say, inaudible) waves generated by an analogue synthesizer. Numbering about 40 for a full performance, the automata consist mostly of drums, cymbals, and shakers of various sizes, as well as several toy mandolins and banjos. Excluding the occasional store-bought instruments, they're constructed from the booty of one hundred yard

sales: an assortment of bottles, thread spools, corks and bits of metal. Triggering them is a maze of weights, spindles, vibrating speaker-cones, makeshift driveshafts, and even used computer disks. Where the mercury-filled bubble will eventually fit in is impossible to say.

Yet it's all beautiful to behold, and clearly there's a degree of theatre involved in generating what he calls "an illusion of rhythm". Not surprising, as Rioux's background is in visual art (he has a degree in sculpture). At live performances, audience members crane their necks feverishly, trying to trace sounds to their sources and figure out what makes each automaton tick before it stops, another one somewhere else picks up the beat, and necks crane in a different direction. The modularity and mutability of his set-up – which is put together by hand for each gig, a process that can take more than a day – allows him to place the automata in a nearly infinite variety of arrangements. For example, during his New York residency, there was a traditional audience/stage set-up at the jazz loft Roulette, while at the sound art gallery Disapason the automata were scattered in an almost random pattern around the exhibition space, in front of and behind audience members and even, in a bit of extra-credit mischief, above door frames.

Unlike much process-oriented music, the Automates actually work well on record (and Rioux even provides photographs of some automata as a helpful visual aid). The debut CD, Automates KI (Plastique, 1997), has somewhat recklessly been compared to electric Miles Davis; other reference points include Pierre Bastien, the French composer and builder of similarly bizarre hybrid instruments; and radical dub: think early African Head Charge. In spite of the tremendous sonic range of the automata, the beats seem perpetually rootless, as if some important foundation instrument has been out of the mix, which of course isn't the case at all. Rioux/Rochefoucauld's first release also included live playing on heavily reverberated trumpets and keyboards, lending the tunes a nomadic, Middle

Eastern quality. In contrast, the recently released Collection Somnambule (Music For Insomniacs) has a more grounded feel, with less flighty human accompaniment and reverb, and more of a focus on the crashing, cascading polyrhythms of Automates percussion. "Otherworldliness" is a common description of Automates music. In fact, according to Rioux, people all over the world describe it as "foreign" or "alien" – from anywhere but "here". "When I performed concerts in Senegal," he says, "I brought only my mechanisms along, and hooked them up to native Senegalese instruments. And you know what? The locals said, 'It sounds like something from Sierra Leone!'"

Rioux is, of course, working within a long tradition of automaton music (player-pianos and music boxes, for example, as well as the more advanced mechanisms of Maurice Martenot, father of the ondes martenot, and Alvin Lucier). But unlike much of the music composed for automata – where machines simply carry out the precise wishes of their composer-masters – Rioux's has a very high randomness quotient. He doesn't like the idea of keeping his automata on a short leash and has no interest in "composing melodies". He recently bought a record of composed music for automaton violin and hates it. "He soul" is his only comment. The importance of "soul" to Rioux is perhaps revealed by the name of his project: "KI" is a reference to Chinese chi or Japanese ki – the vital but invisible energy all around us. The sounds of his automata are physical representations of unseen waves or energy. He certainly plays this up in concert, deep in thought as he routes mysterious, unheard sounds this way and that from his mixing console. But his mystical side is always tempered by a certain science-fair geekiness. A couple of minutes declaring about the balance between chaos and order in the sonic manifestations of his waves, and he's leavily back to talking like an engineer. "Now, if you look at this on an oscilloscope..." he begins. At which point he lowers me again. □ Collection Somnambule is out now on Point Out. Website: www.homepage.mac.com/automateski

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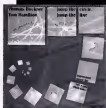
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Global Ear: Washington DC

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month: Chuck Bettis witnesses an upsurge of underground activity in the US capital



Washington post-everything: DJ Panic, Richard Chartier

Built to a Masonic design, Washington DC is a city that is a secret even unto itself. Depending on where you enter, you will encounter burnt-out buildings dating from the Martin Luther King Jr riots during the 60s, posh homes, or the depressingly typical American urban ghetto. Constant surveillance has promoted a growing reticence among people involved in any kind of underground activity. Musicians here have no desire to get onto a major label – their sound is nurtured on sweat and blood. DC's reputation might be founded on its bygone punk and Go-Go years, but the recent upsurge of noise from the city's expanding community of experimental musicians is beginning to redraw the city's musical map.

A quick survey of DC's proliferating experimental activity takes in the Mass Particles collective (who've launched a Web label, Submass, and forged strong links with Baltimore's fertile scene); Metatron Press, John Matis's CDR label; avant imprints VHF (whose roster includes avant folksters From Quagmire, and free noise trio Rake, whose guitarist Vinnie Van Go-Goo also hosts www.dc-improv.com/) and Crank Automotive (who feature Bruce Russell, Wire contributor Allen Licht and Mikrokrytes); and the Progressive/free jazz institution Cuneiform.

You'd never know it from reading the local press, but DC electronics is also going strong: local resident Richard Chartier earned an honourable mention at last year's Pnix Ars Electronica for his elegant minimalist releases on his pioneering digital "microsound" label Line and Taylor Deupree's 12k. Additionally, he has a sound installation at NYC's Whitney Museum; but whenever he's in DC, he keeps a low profile, despite releasing multiple CDs each year and organising a weekly Sunday night lounge called Filler, combining music and visuals. Despite being forced by arthritis to

change from guitar to computer, composer Alberto Gaitán has acquired an international reputation for his orchestral scores and sound sculptures. He also plays out with his 'media band' xLO+. The concept of beats isn't entirely alien to DC electronics. Mikrokrytes are a duo who target their combination of analogue/digital electronics and violin more at the dancefloor than the concert stage, while John Rickman and Eric Bruns's EBSK use vintage SK-1 synths, clannet and electronics to create beat orientated, Eno-style tracks that explore the Ambient end of circuit bending.

Unsurprisingly, Chartier, Gaitán and others who make quiet, diffident musics are hardly what you'd describe as attention seekers. Artists coming out of the punk tradition, on the other hand, aren't so shy about getting right in your face. DJ Panic aka Jeff Bagato says he is "exploring electronic sounds of love created by playing vinyl LPs with a handheld hacksaw". He also writes an underground art and music zine, fittingly titled *Mole*, and is part of Spaceships Panic Orbit, whose number includes members of Hat City Initiative. Equally in your face is 36, the project of former Nimrod drummer Sam Loran, co-founder of the Japan Overseas label. And my own digital project, *Trope And The Arcade*, is currently involved in real time music, video and dance performances.

Out of necessity these DC artists are also promoters – well, nobody else is going to do it for them. Their DIY philosophy is partially a legacy of the city's free jazz and punk scenes. Indeed, headed by the likes of Bad Brains, Minor Threat, Fugazi, SOA and Rites Of Spring, its 80s hardcore punk scene had a huge influence on the whole American underground that went way beyond music. Their work ethic, commitment to the local scene and strident manifestos served as models for similar community-driven punk initiatives across the

United States.

The DC area's experimental outfits and musicians still follow their example today. Ortheim are an amazingly prolific duo whose fusion of lightning fast guitar riffs and on-the-dime drumming suggests late period John Coltrane meeting Carl Stalling at a Death Metal summit. Last year they released six recordings on labels such as Hydrahead, Troublemaker Unlimited and Tolotta. But the real rush is the way Ortheim live run all their compositions together to create a dissonant yet transcendence sensation. The group's Josh Blair also doubles as the drummer in the DC/New York outfit ABCs. Then there's El Guapo, whose members have been known to moonlight with Anthony Braxton, CCMA and ABCs. Using a drum machine, guitar, accordion, drums and vocals, their music is a weird blend of pop, club beats and 20th century avant garde.

Other DC mavericks of note include the Maya Dericen Influenced video artist and musician Amelia Saddington, who plays gypsy-style accordion with RaRafre+Am, promotes the video art night Fast Forward and moonlights as a dancer in the performance troupe Domestic Tar Pital. Her fellow RaRafre+Am member Frankie Vogt, meanwhile, is a "prepared" bassist who also sits in with experimental jazz, classical, and Metal musicians. But DC's hardest working outfit has to be All Scars, a self-styled "smokebox" New Music ensemble, made up of individuals who have variously worked in African pop groups, roadied for Fugazi and staged solo electronic shows, while running the Mass Particles label and a recording studio. Yet they still have enough energy left to devote a different set for every city they visit. □

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Invisible Jukebox

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Joëlle Léandre

Tested by Dan Warburton. Photo by Rene Davila

French bassist, improviser and composer Joëlle Léandre has been a towering presence in contemporary classical and improvised music throughout the world for over a quarter of a century. After graduating with flying colours from the Paris Conservatoire, she played bass in France's leading New Music ensembles - L'itinéraire, 2E/2M and Ensemble InterContemporain (under Pierre Boulez) - as well as freelancing as an orchestral player (working with, amongst others, Leonard Bernstein and Lorin Maazel). She was one of the first bassists to commission a contemporary repertoire for the instrument, and composers as diverse as Giacinto Scelsi, Betsy Jolas, Aldo Clementi and Fred Frith have written pieces specially for her. In 1976 she won a scholarship to work in the United States, where she befriended John Cage, Morton Feldman, Merce Cunningham and Yvar Mikhashoff, who encouraged her to contact Scelsi. She became a close friend of the composer during the last ten years of his life, and released a definitive recording of his double bass music, *Okanagan*, on hat ART in 1993, five years after his death. She has recorded with a roll-call of contemporary figures including Anthony Braxton, Derek Bailey, Daunik Lazro, George Lewis, Paul Lovens, Evan Parker, William Parker, Irène Schweizer and Sebi Tramontana, featuring on such labels as FMP, For 4 Ears, Hat Art, Intakt, Leo, Potlatch and Victo. The Jukebox took place in her flat in Paris, with two cats and a quintet commission sitting on her music stand nearby.

PIERRE BOULEZ

"POLYPHONIE X"

FROM POLYPHONIE X (COOL LEGNO) 1951, RECORDED 2000

It's not improvised. Not Schoenberg... it's less precise than Schoenberg.

Why do you say that?

In the flow of phrases, the mass, the ensemble writing. Very serial, very après-guerre. I don't know. [Looks at sleeve] Oh my God, it's Boulez. I don't know this piece. I must buy this.

He only agreed to have it released recently. It's one of Boulez's mythical, early orchestral total serial pieces from the early 50s.

I remember working with him. The man is rigid - but human, implacable. He arrives, says 'Messieurs, dames, bonjour. We're going to work on page...' And you're off! You don't have time to breathe. His compositional rigour defined him as a conductor. I've played under Bernstein, Maazel... but nobody works you like Boulez. You don't find that any more.

Why did you choose the double bass as your instrument?

I didn't choose it, it chose me. I started with the piano, and our piano tuner told us about a wonderful bass teacher, Pierre Delecluse, and persuaded my younger brother to take it up. Nine months later / took up the bass and he switched to piano. And we made music together. I love the expression 'make music' - music is something you make, I fell in love with this great, big, upright, impossible object. It was a challenge - it still is. I come from a working class family. I'm proud to say my father was a carter [road builder]. Musical education was always something associated with people of a higher class, with a certain culture, and I wanted to prove to my parents that I could do it. From the age of nine to 17 I worked at the instrument, studied at the Conservatoire in Aix-en-Provence, then passed the concours for the Paris Conservatoire, where I stayed for three years. I was polemical, critical, angry.

I already had doubts about the bass repertoire - I hate transcriptions of pieces written for viola, flute, etc. I heard Jacob Druckman's [1969 solo bass piece] *Valentine* - wonderful. I fell in love with the 20th century. A living music - enough of these dead composers, enough of this neoclassical! I was very young when I started playing contemporary music - it was in 1970, and I hadn't finished Conservatoire when I joined the ensemble L'itinéraire. I was one of the first bassists to commission a repertoire specifically for the bass - there are more than 40 works written for me. I played with the Ensemble InterContemporain, 2E/2M and freelanced as an orchestral player. At the same time, I was going to jazz clubs, but I didn't really get into black jazz until I went to the States in 1976.

JOHN CAGE

"SIX (THIRD TAKE)"

FROM SOME YOUTH DOODLE 20TH CENTURY (BYO) 1991, RECORDED 1999

[Listens attentively] It sounds like an improvisation by a group trying to play contemporary music.

Bravo.

It sounds like an old piece, with all that percussion and electronics. It could be oriental. Fred Frith? [Looks at album] Oh, it's not Cage for me. It's not Cage at all. [Listens more] Well, yes and no. Cage gives you the freedom and the responsibility to redefine his thinking and his music. I find this very expressive, yet Cage spent much of his life campaigning against expressivity. Having said that, when Cage came to the Opéra Bastille to hear his *Europera 5*, about a year before he died, I was listening to the piano part with

him during rehearsals and it was very... almost romantic! I turned to him and said, 'There's a lot of melody, John.' He laughed that famous laugh of his and replied, 'Sometimes it does you good.'

Do you consider Cage's work to be completely different from European contemporary music?

No, not at all. Cage was never appreciated in Europe, people never listened carefully enough. Like Sabe, he wasn't taken seriously. He said to me before he died: 'Joëlle, I'm going to leave you, and I'm afraid that people haven't understood my music.' He music. Not his thinking or his writing. He was one of the great figures of the 20th century, but first and foremost he was a musician. A composer! True, his thinking was very liberal: be yourself, indeed, go your own way, but before that you need to learn how to stand up. Cage gave me that sense of responsibility. They say he didn't like improvisation, but I don't believe that. He improvised a lot, but there was always something compositional. If only a stopwatch, a composer's ear to redefine things.

GIACINTO SCELSI

"HYMNOS"

FROM HYMNOS (MOJO) 1983, RECORDED 2001

[After ten seconds] Scelsi. The material, the fingerprints. Sound power. I can talk about Scelsi all day. Is there a link?

No, it's a *Hymnos*, scored for two orchestras from 1963, two years before *Anahit*. You had a special musical affinity and composer/performer relationship with the Italian. How did you originally meet him? I came back from the States in 1976 and I was in Rome. I had his number and called him. He spoke impeccable French: 'Allo? Vous êtes qui?' I said: 'Je suis Joëlle Léandre, bassiste. I'd like to meet you.' 'Vous venez quand?' I'm full of myself, you know! I've always been an action woman. Like when I met Cage, I went round to where he lived in Bank Street in New York and rang his doorbell.

Towards the end of his life Scelsi wrote a large number of pieces for female instrumentalists, including Carol Robinson, Michiko Hirayama and, of course, yourself. Why do you think he enjoyed working with women performers so much? He claimed that women were more coherent and open with their sensitivity. Men tend to hide that. For him it was about bringing to life, giving birth to his music. His music is about birth, life and death. It's very profound. Only women can give birth. And if you're conscious of what it is to give birth you also know what it is to put to death. That is a universal conscience that women everywhere carry within them. Scelsi's music is something that affects you enormously, whether you're from Africa, the Himalayas or Burgundy. It's unique. It looks quite simple, but it's so difficult to play.

It was rumoured that much of his music was in fact written by his copyists.

I don't want to hear about that. Scelsi was very rich, of course. He could afford to pay others to help him. He certainly wasn't a caricaturing Communist, and his work was very badly received. He published his music himself for a long time. Maybe he did need a helping hand from others - so did Mozart, by the way. He was a great improviser, a fine pianist. He'd play the piano some evenings and record himself on his old Revex A 67, the reggie. There are some recordings of him improvising - I think Wergo has the tapes - which will be released someday. When you analyse the scores, especially some of the piano music, there's a sort of formal chaos there - it seems clear to me that those piano scores are improvisations that have been transcribed. Who by, I don't know. I don't know if that's the case for the quartets or the clannet pieces, but

Invisible Jukebox

when you listen to the cello pieces, I'm sorry, it's definitely Scelsi who wrote everything.
How did you work with him?

He would come down in the early afternoon, work with us, and then disappear until the evening. We had dinner together, he had his litre of olive oil – the family fortune came from Sicilian olives. We sat in a room with a palm tree he used for meditation, with a painting by Picasso, or maybe a De Chirico, on the wall behind him. And we worked. I'll never forget how long it took to find the right kind of cry, this scream I have to perform in Makongan, and how he grabbed my arm: "C'est ça!" He was always supportive and generous. When he sent me the score of *Mantram* (for solo bass), he said: "C'est un cadeau. Do what you want with it."

Everyone goes on about how Scelsi didn't like Bach and Beethoven, but he had a sense of humour too – he could be a rogue when he wanted. Perhaps he was a bit odd, talking to bums in the street and that, but he was a genuine mystic. He'd had this accident and spent three years in a clinic, and he really learned how to concentrate, how to listen. He was the first (along with Ligeti, perhaps) to focus on the sound (outer surface, bark of a tree, husk, niche) of sound. I think I was in Aix, and I called him Jolie, I want to see you. I went to him on 4 August. He died on the eighth. I was present when he died. I held his hand. I saw him go out... like a candle.

RADU MALFATTI

"DAS PROFIL DES SCHWEIFENS"

FROM DAS PROFIL DES SCHWEIFENS (TIMESCRAPER) 1998
What's that sound? [After a long silence] Very Cageian. Is it MIDI percussion? It's electronic.

No, they're acoustic instruments. It's a string quartet.

What? If those are stringed instruments, I'll be damned. It's so metallic. [Listens intently] I give up. Who is it?

It's a quartet composition by Radu Malfatti written in 1997. The score stipulates the difference between the instruments – the pegs, the tailpiece, the back, the bridge – but all the sounds are bowed.

I played with Radu back in the early 80s, in the Rue Dunois... even then he was quite into silence. This is extraordinary.

Today he says he can't extend most improvised music because it's too 'gabby', or busy. Do you agree?

It's not all like that – there are different 'schools'. Nobody really invents anything, you know. Things move a little bit, in terms of technology, certainly, but there's nothing really new. What's his name, with his trumpet, Axel Dörner, with his phhhht phhhht phhhht... people were doing that 25 years ago. Radu was part of that. I can understand him getting tired of it. I couldn't: I never tire of improvising.

I have a 'perpetual notion of what a musician is: the improviser, the performer, the improviser and the composer. The modern notion of what a composer is very different from what it once was. Nowadays they study composition, that's all they do. They don't make music, they don't play instruments. In composition and harmony classes in music colleges you're not even allowed to touch a piano. It's all rules. Conservative equals conservative. It's very imperialist, colonial. But Europe's only a little bit of the world. What about Chinese music? Indian music? Arabic music, Indonesian music – that exists too. Go out and listen to African pygmy music like our friend Ligeiti. That's improvised music too. I love jazz, and jazz musicians, though I don't consider myself one – I don't have the right background. Jazz is another appellation of improvised music. And improvised music existed

centuries ago, in Europe too. People came to the salons to hear Chopin improvise. Not to mention Bach – great improviser. A total musician.

In improvisation, you take up your instrument, like a tool. It is a tool, but it's also a mirror of what you are in the present moment, sadness, pain, pleasure, jubilation, they're all so real in that moment of improvisation, that so great love. And then you work on it. It's a question of knowing how to structure the music with your playing partners, and of trusting the musicians you play with. Most of my encounters in free improvisation are duos, trios or quartets – I very rarely play with more than three other musicians in a free context – and the men and women I play with become themselves the score. When I play with Carlos [Zingaro] I play differently from how I play with a trombone or with a singer. A language is created in the ensemble. No, going back to Radu, I can never tire of improvised music. It's so vast – the individual playing with you is an enormous reservoir of poetic experience. In improvisation you can do so much! You can set off tomorrow and sit on the top of a mountain with an African you've never met before, or go into the Metro and play with an accordionist and make great music. You can never really know who that person is. Do you know who you are? I don't know who I am. Maybe before I die I'll have some ideas.

GEORGE LEWIS

"HOMAGE TO CHARLES PARKER"

FROM HOMAGE TO CHARLES PARKER (BLACK SAINT) 1978

[Listens for a while] I have no idea. It's wonderful. So melodic, so romantic. It's American, black. It can't be Anthony Braxton [on sax].
Not too far off, it's Douglas Ewart.

[Piano solo begins] It's not Muhal Richard Abrams? **You're very close. There's an AACM connection.** [Several minutes later, the trombone comes in] Oh, it's George! What record is that? Who's on piano?

It's "Homage To Charles Parker" from 1978. Anthony Davis on piano, Richard Teitelbaum on keyboards.

I wouldn't have guessed Anthony. George is what we were just talking about, a musician involved in research, in technology, with a great knowledge of European music, a great curiosity. Like Braxton. There aren't many. What's Richard doing on this? **Playing synthesizers behind. You have a concert coming up with George soon, I think, at the Cité de la Musique in Paris.**

As a duo, yes. George is a great friend, but we haven't played together for a long time. He's been so busy with his writing and teaching in California. He wants to play in the second part of the concert, which is an octet, a homage to Satie. I've always appreciated Satie, because he always went against the grain and did what he wanted. He didn't have any problems with writing cabaret songs, he made fun of society, he was a provocateur. I like that. I feel a kind of affinity with that – I'm a kind of outlaw too. My piece for the octet is a homage, but I don't use any of his music.

BRUNO MEILLIER & TOSHIMARU

NAKAMURA

"POUSSE POUSSE GO"

FROM SPINACIO (SME) 2001

The material is very interesting. Completely electronic. [Listens] But it sounds almost like bells or bowed cymbals. It's not American. It's certainly recent – if you'd chosen something by Pierre Schaeffer maybe I'd have got it. That relentless rhythm... I'm sure I don't know what it is. Keith [Rowe]?

One of the musicians is French, the other Japanese.

It's not Otomo [Noshidze]?

He plays with Otomo, and also with Keith Rowe. It's Toshimaru Nekomura, and Bruno Meillier.

I thought Bruno played sax. What is he playing here? We should see him more often in Paris.

He's on synthesizer, with a Shermen effects box. But he still plays sax. What do you think of electronics in improvisation?

A few years ago I had a great big rack of pedals, and I ended up selling them. Maybe I'm a purist, but when you get into the instrument, when you go beyond normal bowing, you sometimes find sounds which are almost like sinewaves, like electronics. I'm amazed at what I can get out of the good old instrument, and for me that's the enough. Like the Mallatzi we heard earlier...

Do you think performers using laptops can react quickly enough in improvising situations?

I've worked with Richard [Teitelbaum] and Joel Ryan, and I can say that when you work with a real expert it's wonderful. Like any instrument, there's a lot of study involved, a lot of practice and work. Keith has been doing it for 30 years. I don't want to seem mean-spirited, but there are a lot of twiddlers out there. There's a lot of crap. But it's the same with pianists: there are good pianists, there are average pianists and there are pianists de merde.

ARTHUR DOYLE ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC

ENSEMBLE

"GOVERY" & "MONEY"

FROM THE AFRICAN LOVE CALL (ECSTATIC YOGI) 2001

[Chuckles on hearing Doyle's singing] It's not him, but it reminds me of Cecil Taylor, reciting his poetry as he arrives on stage, with his castanets. [The full group comes in on "Money"] It's total chaos, wild! Well, I can tell you it's certainly not European, that's for sure. [Doyle's tenor sax enters] It could be a really old Art Ensemble Of Chicago disc...

But it's not. It's just come out.

My God, is there a violin waiting in there? It's not. Butch Morris, because he's much more organised than that. It's not Fred Frith, though you never know what to expect with Fred. Where was it recorded, Chicago? New York? I give up.

It's Arthur Doyle, an American who now lives and works in Paris. There's a tendency these days, especially amongst promoters, to consider free jazz and free improvisation as two totally different worlds. Do you?

I don't make any difference between them. Free jazz is an appellation. There's still the word 'jazz'... I think the idea of rhythm is important in free jazz, the bass and drums, that fluidity. The horn players may play free, but there remains that polytempo behind, that rhythmic propulsion. Apart from that, I don't see much difference. I remember when I was still at the Conservatoire, I went to see Alan Silva and Bill Dixon. I used to go to the American Center. Frank Lowe, Frank Wright, they were all here. It was dangerous music, and it marked me for life. Nowadays jazz is so commercial, so institutionalised, with all these young guys with all their CDs who know all the [chorus] charts, all the riffs by heart, and... so what? Here in France there are 325 bassists fresh out of school every year, 124 trumpeters, 412 jazz pianists, and what are they all going to do? It's comforting to me to know that music can still resist. I'm happy in the knowledge that Ornette's still here, that Braxton's still here, that we're still here. Joëlle Léandre & Kazuo Sawai's *Organe – Mineral* is out now on In Situ. Out Of Sound, with Lauren Newton and Urs Leimgruber, is out this month on Leo. The Chicken Chicken is out in Complex, with Carlos Zingaro and Sebi Tramontana, is out in March on Leo.



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RAINFOREST CRUNCH

IN NOVEMBER 2001, EXPERIMENTAL GUITARIST/AMM FOUNDER KEITH ROWE AND A GROUP OF FELLOW IMPROVISORS TOOK PART IN THE FESTIVAL DE L'EAU IN THE REMOTE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, BRAVING MONSOONS, LEECHES AND BRIBE-HUNGRY SOLDIERS TO COLLABORATE WITH LOCAL PYGMY MUSICIANS. IN THIS EXCLUSIVE DIARY, HE RECORDS AN UNPRECEDENTED MEETING OF WORLDS

PHOTOS: KAMEL MAAD

The Festival de l'Eau took place over eight days in the Central African Republic, and aimed to bring about a unique set of collaborations between improvisors, World Musicians and dancers from outside the CAR, and the pygmy musicians and orchestras from its remote towns and villages. The CAR is one of the most remote and inaccessible regions of Africa. Lying above the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it's completely landlocked, with a population of 3.6 million scattered throughout its extensive plains and rainforests. Largely unrehearsed, the confrontations took place in the manner of Derek Bailey's legendary Company Weeks, with musicians simply being thrown together on stage. In many cases the pygmy musicians had never heard each other's groups, never mind the music coming in from Europe.

As well as Keith Rowe, the French musicians taking part in the festival were Airline Noetinger (electroacoustics), Dominique Chevacher (voice/theatre), Camel Zein (guitar) and Jean-Pierre Baudouin (saxophone). The Central African groups were Orchestre Trompes De Banda (dance, tree root trumpets, bells) and M'Bota Pygmies (dance, chant and l'arc musical). Others taking part included Aly Kote (balafon, Mali), Yacouba Moumouni (flute, Niger), Kamel Maad (flute, Algeria-France) and Fred Yipendit (dance, CAR). What follows is Keith Rowe's diary of the trip.

23 NOVEMBER 2001

This is the second attempt to hold the Festival de

l'Eau. The first, scheduled for the previous January, was abandoned because of street violence following demonstrations by schoolteachers and civil servants who had not been paid for two years. Ten months later they have still not been paid and there is sporadic shooting on the streets. Last week there was a stand-off between President Ange-Félix Patassé's troops and soldiers loyal to the chief of staff, who had just been sacked. All is calm for now, but could quickly deteriorate without warning.

Given the recent shootings, I check the British Government's Foreign Office travel advice Website. "We advise against all travel to the CAR," it says, accompanied by a long list of warnings about curfews, not to wear valuables, not to travel at night (and only in daylight, with armed escorts); not to mention illnesses such as sleeping sickness, malaria...

The festival has been organised by the partnership of Camel Zein and Dominique Chevacher. Camel descends from generations of Algerian musicians; while studying in Paris, he formed a link between the traditional musics he had experienced in Africa and 'free improvisation'. To his ears, both forms shared an openness not found in other musics. He imagined a meeting based on this openness, allowing vastly different musical styles to work together. It would not be a question of fusing different elements – after all, there is no musical 'problem' to be solved. Rather than impose a search for a common dialogue, he instigated the Festival because he wanted to see what would happen when musicians simply played together in a spirit of shared openness.



Opposite page: Keith Rowe (in canoe, facing camera) takes a trip into the Central African Republic interior. Above: Pygmies and invited musicians inside the compound in CAR's capital, Bangui

24 NOVEMBER: GETTING THERE

The flight from Paris to the Central African capital Bangui is pretty uneventful. I select French country cuisine from the Poitou Charentes region (fish and leeks, turkey with Gamay sauce, camembert, Cabernet VDP). I plug in my 'écouteur Air-Land' and click to Channel 4 (Air France's World Music channel) and by an extraordinary coincidence I immediately hear the music of Yaouba Moumoune – who is sitting in the next seat. He starts running around the plane getting people to "check out Channel 4 – c'est moi! C'est moi!" Hmm: maybe he really is an African superstar.

Eight hours later we arrive at Bangui-Mpoko airport. It's 6:30 in the morning. All the equipment is loaded onto an open-backed 4x4. Before we have travelled 25 metres, gunshots echo from the departure lounge. Our driver accelerates, swerving violently to avoid people running all over the place. The drive from the airport along the Avenue des Martyres triggers all the filmic images I've experienced, but now with the air full of aromas and hypervivid colour.

25 NOVEMBER: OUR COMPOUND

We arrive in the capital Bangui and are taken to our residence at La Coline, an area on the east side overlooking the city. Pygmies are relaxing in the shade, under the effect of the palm wine, I'm told later by our hosts from the Alliance Française.

Cooks have barbecued a whole goat, and discussion

around the meal does not revolve around Western concerns such as house prices, but gory descriptions of "coups d'états I've seen", with enactments and illustrations of damage done to the victims – as well as the all-important mosquito stones. Sleep – still really hot, humid, strange: it gets dark at 5:30. The pygmies and trompe (literally "trumpet") groups sleep in the open on grass mats. I lie in my bed, waiting for the mosquitoes and flies to arrive. It gets light early – cold showers at 8:30 are not my preference. This is a coffee producing country but all we get for breakfast is Nescafé. For me, this symbolises the way Africa gets screwed by Europe.

26-28 NOVEMBER TROMPES AND PYGMIES

Over the next few days we are scheduled to play with two groups of pygmies from two separate villages. Communications in the CAR are extremely basic – outside of the major centres there is no electricity, phones or post, and if you need to travel between towns, you have to walk. Consequently the two CAR groups here have never even encountered each other's music, let alone that of us Westerners. The pygmies use a mixture of vocal sounds, sustained, rising and falling, employing huge intervallic leaps reminiscent of yodelling, chest notes alternating with head notes. Apparently many of the 'songs' relate to hunting experiences. The trompe group employ a highly complex polyphonic kaleidoscope of sound, blowing

through hollowed-out tree roots and antelope horns. They are directed by a leader using hand-held bells, playing and dancing in a snaking line, their counterpart changing continually as they move.

In mid-morning, we assemble for our first music making session. We introduce ourselves to the assembled company, first in standard French, then Central African French, then in the local Sangha: our names, instruments and what we do. I cannot tell what it means for the pygmies and the trompe group to see this strange guy (i.e. me) put a knife into the guitar strings and talk about the transformation of a utilitarian object into the art object through placement, and the importance of ambiguity. The African musicians talk about ritual, society and place.

We begin to play. The sheer volume and expressive power of the trompe group is incredible, blowing a trombone-like, strongly contrapuntal sound through hollowed-out tree roots.

We finish the 'European Improv' scene as familiar with the unfamiliar, and with the politics of listening. Since these two groups from the CAR have never seen or heard each other's music and dance either, it's a revelation for them too. I'm not sure how they perceive us, or what their experience of the unfamiliar is. How do we deal with this possible unevenness without employing paternalism and cultural hegemony? I don't think I've encountered such extremes – not just different musical styles, but wealth, lifestyle, where we live, what we eat, how we dress, experiences, thoughts, stories. For three days we eat, drink and play all together and in various combinations.



"THE STAGE LIGHTS SNAP ON. IMMEDIATELY A BLIZZARD OF MOSQUITOES DESCENDS, RESEMBLING WWII DIVE BOMBERS – THOUSANDS OF THEM, HUGE, DAZED, STUNNED, CRAWLING ALL OVER MY GUITAR, ELECTRONICS, HANDS, EYES"

During this period one can hear the way Yacouba's flute acquires a distinctly electronic edge as he reaches out to accommodate the brocade electronics from myself and Jérôme Noetinger. Aly's balafon now sounds like continuous clatter, much more abstract, less obviously linked to the other African musics. Our own electronics have become closer to nature: the cicadas, frogs, wind, distant dogs, strangely ancient and modern, rather like prehistoric cave drawings that suddenly resemble a Matisse or Picasso.

The pygmies are constantly collecting and using found materials in their dances. In the compound, where we are working, the plant life and terrain are very different from their village surroundings. On one occasion the group are taken in to Bangui to buy 'new' clothes. They return with ex-70s and 80s French sportswear: orange and yellow trackuits, hooded sweatshirts, etc. Almost immediately they incorporate the sweatshirt hoods, with the 'new' leaves, to fashion a headdress juxtaposing these unfamiliar materials. During these three days, a sentence from an article by Bruce Bower in *Science News* sticks in my mind: "The pleasure of the new is a biological mechanism that can loosen the grip of previously acquired perspectives on the world and lay the neural groundwork for securing crucial new knowledge." This, in fact, reflects our whole enterprise here: the juxtaposition of musical parts, previously unimagined, perceived at this moment without prejudice.

into town and visit Bangui. We are told we will need to walk for an hour or so and cross a stream. I imagine this means wading, perhaps up to my knees. I guess in my head I have an image of the countryside in Devon or Cornwall.

We make our way out of Bangui, and at the city limit we encounter our first roadblock. It seems pretty typical: soldiers sitting around, one slowly strobing to our vehicle to check the passports and the all important transit documents which have to be obtained for every journey outside Bangui.

Hundreds of people are walking on each side of the road. Occasionally we pass an ancient Peugeot loaded beyond belief. With its doors removed, it allows perhaps ten people to hold on, along with sacks of rice, bananas, boxes of food, firewood. Our driver has acquired the French technique of driving: hand on horn, we pass through villages at 100-120 km/h. People and goats evaporate before us, except the ducks, who have not yet acquired a Pavlovian response to car horns (get out the orange sauce...)

We pass the town of Bimbo (no cheap comments from me). 150 kilometres later the road narrows and we arrive at the River Lobaye, it gets difficult from now on. We precariously balance our way onto a long dugout canoe and struggle against the flow. When we reach the other side we begin to walk into the forest. The number of skills I haven't developed are about to become evident: balancing while walking along slippery tree trunk bridges above dark slimy green-brown water; wading barefoot through leech-infested water; how not to be distracted by flies.

After two hours of wading, walking, slipping, balancing and slipping again, I look as if I've been in the rainforest for a year. We reach the village of

Basile, about five kilometres from the border with former Belgian Congo – red-earth gijoo type structures of palm stalks and giant leaves. We meet and shake hands with the standard greeting "Bonyou", always met with the reply "Merco". Wading through the forest, we pass pygmies returning from hunting, one with a wild boar strapped on his back and carrying a rifle of First World War vintage that's taller than him; others with all types of wildlife suspended from canelike structures.

We've taken so long to arrive at the village that we must return almost immediately, but not before reflecting on what it must be like to be a musician here, making a music so integrated with everyday life. Of course, I cannot imagine – I guess I would need to stay here for some considerable time before even scratching the surface. It will be dark in an hour, so we depart and take a longer but easier route back. Roughly an hour into the walk, darkness falls, illuminated only by a tropical storm close by. The whole forest is lit up intermittently, overwater tree-trunk balancing is replaced by underwater tree-balancing (the fourth undeveloped skill). Here we are, barefoot in the dark, feeling our way along submerged tree trunks. Now the storm has reached us: I constantly fall off, landing up to my waist in fast flowing streams. I grew up in Plymouth and thought I knew a thing or two about rain, but this deluge is enormous, like a film set.

We reach the river, but our guide and boatman says it's too rough to cross. The prospect of camping out does not appeal. After much discussion we get back in the boat. It's surreal, moving fast downstream in the dark, lightning illuminating the orange silt with blue flashes. I put my hand in the water: it's hot! Reaching the other side we are soaked, and begin

29 NOVEMBER: THE INTERIOR

Today there is no playing. Instead, we plan to visit the village where the pygmy musicians live, while they go



Opposite page left to right: Jérôme Noëfinger with local residents; troupe orchestra from the Bembari tribe; Rualist Yacouba Moumouni. Above: Music conference in the compound

driving back against the clock in order to beat the curfew. The only indication of villages is the smell of wood fires. On the outskirts of Bangui, at the very last roadblock, the army commander informs us that although the curfew is at 9pm, the barrier closes at six. In our party is Hubert Bongossou of the music group Zokela, 'big star' in the Central African Republic. We are rescued by his fame – the commander recognises him and lifts the barrier. We arrive with minutes to spare.

The evening's entertainment is provided by film maker Kamel Maad, who has discovered a giant leech attached to his leg. Once detached, the pygmies delight in burning, squashing and gnawing this engorged object. Sleep, though not before examining every inch of my body for foreign objects,

descends, resembling WWII dive bombers – thousands of them, huge, dazed and stunned, crawling all over my gut, electronics, hands, eyes.

We appear as the group Nomad – the ones who have travelled to Central Africa. The plan is for the amplified group of instruments to start, and we generate a gentle, slow drifting sound that permeates the night air – it's as if we have amplified the heat, humidity, the buzzing of the insects. Again it feels like 'nature's nature' with an Industrial edge. After a while, we are joined by Moumouni and Keita. Their flute and balafon, layered over the electronics, transform the electrostatic into a sonic map of Africa. Spread over the large stage, some 10-15 metres apart, they almost reflect the vastness of this continent. The organic hum slowly dissolves into the background cacada buzz – leaving the flute on its own.

Then, in the far distance we hear the Orchestre Ge Trompe from behind the audience, dancing and blowing as they slowly move towards the stage. You can feel the excitement radiating from the crowd – many experiencing these musicians for the first time. As the Orchestra reach the stage the power of their sound is incredible. The sheer force of movement is overpowering. The audience breaks into spontaneous clapping, cheering, shouting. 20 minutes later the Orchestra stop abruptly, and again the cacadas fill the vacuum. Slowly Red Yapendet moves centre stage. He is the only contemporary dancer in the CAR. In complete silence, he becomes a pivotal point between tradition and modernity. His movements are projected live by Kamel Maad using a handheld video camera capable of incredible close-ups. At one point the huge screen is filled with the grain of the dancer's black skin. He dances off stage to collect more pygmies,

who are waiting off to our right. Soon we hear the pygmy chant. Yapendet stays on stage for a while, making movements which become modern translations of the pygmy dance. It's as if he is bringing tradition to meet the modern world of video image and electronics.

Clad in enormous grass skirts, the pygmies' dance is an energetic hip-swivelling and rib-rotating movement, a complete blur and very different from the dance of the trompe group. To the rear, the giant screen is filled with digitally collected images of our journey to their village, and gradually our electronic backwash swirls around them. One by one the balafon, flute, tree roots, guitar, voice join in, the focus constantly shifting from Bambari to M'batia, then through Mali, France, Algeria, England, Niger to Bangui.


It's hard to ascertain what it all means. The parts have remained separate – there has been no fusion, crossover, no 'Deep Forest' voodoo, no attempt to homogenise the separate entities beyond the bare fact of co-existence. In a sense, it's been comparatively simple to present this collection of disparate parts in the African forum. There is a plan to tour this project in 2003 in Europe. But how can we present such a concept in a European culture of performance, exhibitions, concerts and spectacles; a culture of fixed start and finish times? And how do we achieve meaningful contextualisation within the realm of Western power relations, cultural and intellectual property, voyeurism, musical aesthetics, musical differences and cultural responsibility?

It has been an immense pleasure and an honour to take part in the Festival de l'Eau, but it will take some considerable time to absorb the experience and I'm left with more questions than answers. □

1 DECEMBER: PERFORMANCE

Independence Day in the Central African Republic. The performance space is a large open air stage with seating ranked in front. We spend a hot, humid afternoon preparing. The performance is due to start at 6pm and finish at eight, giving people time to return home before the curfew at nine – though the evening before, the president made an hour-long declaration. I watch people grouped around a radio, and judging from their hostile body language, the president has a problem with popularity. He announces that from today the curfew will start at midnight – unfortunately too late for us to push back the time of our performance.

The public fill the seating quickly: the French Ambassador and his wife sit with other high flyers in the front row. After a short introduction, the stage lights snap on. Immediately a blizzard of mosquitoes



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COLLABORATORS
JOHN
CAGE,
DAVID
TUDOR
AND
MERCE
CUNNINGHAM

BOMB CULTURE

WORDS
RICHARD
HENDERSON
MAIN
PHOTO:
MARIE
ARAGO



"The historians are out chasing me because I'm getting old, right?" cracks Gordon Mumma. Scanning the view from his home atop a ridge east of Berkeley, California, Gordon Mumma cackles with delight at the prospect of retrospectively examining his formidable position in 20th century music. During the past five decades he has amassed an impossibly varied body of work, composing in acoustic and electronic idioms with equal facility, while consistently dismantling the barriers between the two. He also cuts an elegant figure cradling his signature French horn as a performer of his own compositions or those of his contemporaries.

Though a much younger Gordon Mumma was pictured dead centre of the cover of Michael Nyman's groundbreaking 1974 book *Experimental Music: Cage And Beyond*, he has yet to achieve the wider acclaim of his more illustrious collaborators like fellow composers John Cage and David Tudor, or choreographer Merce Cunningham. But you'd be hard pressed to imagine a more appropriate single person to represent the range of approaches catalogued in Nyman's study than Mumma.

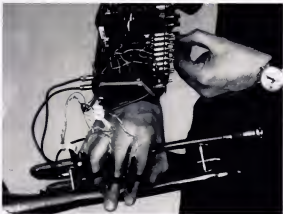
Expanding the definition of 'composer', Mumma deemed the designing and building of electronic circuitry to be as fundamental to his art as musical notation. For him and his composer cohorts in the shoe-string-budget 60s collectives Sonic Arts Union and ONCE Group, generating musical sound was placed on equal footing with the electronic processing of that sound, several aspects of which Mumma made possible with such inventions as his Cybersonic console, worn around his waist, the better to mutate his alphon's timbra. Mumma brought the avant garde musician out of the orchestra pit and onto the stage as an integral component of performance art in the postwar era.

The long awaited release this month of a CD retrospective entitled *Live Electronic Music*, on John Zorn's Tzadik label, contains examples of Mumma's integration of live performance and sounds processed through his self-designed devices, including *Mesa*, a piece for bandoneon and Cybersonic console performed by David Tudor; a reworked and remastered version of *Hornpipe*, in which Mumma's live horn playing is transmuted and distorted through his strap-on Cybersonic gear; and the more recent *Than Particle*, featuring percussionist William Winant. Together with 2000's CD overview, *Studio Retrospect (Lovely Music)*, which compiled his solo electronic work from the end of the 50s through 1984, it permits an overdue reappraisal of Mumma's career as composer, performer and inventor.

Mumma has compiled *Live Electronic Music* as a companion volume to *Studio Retrospect*. Between those two discs, all of the compositions from his two previous *Lovely Music* LPs, save for two pieces, are now available in digital form. "For me a few years is just a few minutes," he says, "I'm behind on getting these recordings out. For all the mentions of these pieces in history books and wherever else, most folks who are curious about them end up wondering where the hell they are," he laments, brightening as he adds, "What's coming out on the CDs are complete versions of pieces that had only been represented by abridged versions on vinyl. My new Tzadik CD has the complete *Hornpipe*, over 18 minutes; the version that was on the *Mainstream* LP had been trimmed to 12 minutes. We had to base the entire beginning of that one for the earlier album."

Even as *Live Electronic Music* finally sees the light of day, Mumma plans two releases for the immediate future, one comprising new recordings and the other continuing the retrospective theme of his exorbitant

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WEIGHT*



GORDON MUMMA PERFORMS *AMB/VEX* (1972) WITH HORN AND BODYMOUNTED CYBERSONIC ACCELEROMETER

discs. The latter, already in the works, includes complete versions of both the 1973 work, *Cybersonic Cantilevers*, and the provocatively titled *Megaton* for William Burroughs. The latter composition, a live electronic piece "for ten electronic, acoustic and communication channels", dates from 1963, the apex of Cold War paranoia. The original performances in 1964 featured long steel wires in which objects whizzed overhead, while the performing ensemble's stage positions were arranged according to the seating plan of a world war two bomber plane, coordinating their actions by headphones links. Murrena recalls, "People were building bomb shelters, crap like that. Panic, right? The title was partly an honorarium to something Burroughs represented, both as an author and as an icon of rebellion, which was beyond his making. Also, because the piece involves airplanes, a Second World War air raid, it was essentially a war statement. I made use of outtakes from propaganda films celebrating the bombing of the enemy, that gives you an idea of [Megaton]'s character. The word 'megaton' was almost sufficient for the title, but when I reread his work now, I realise that this is still potent stuff. I'm glad that I honoured him with that music."

Jordan Murrena first showed his own technologically subversive tendencies as a teenager in the Detroit suburbs, when he took apart his father's turntable and reconstructed it to play records either forwards or backwards. "I kept rebuilding my bicycle when I was a kid, too," he recalls. Born in 1935 in Massachusetts, his family moved to Ann Arbor in 1953 where he enrolled at the University of Michigan. Classically trained on French horn, Murrena began contributing music to campus theatrical productions, and customised tape recorders in order to achieve the specific effects demanded by his scores. For his generation, designing new tools was an essential part of the compositional process. "There were no other options," he asserts. "That's sometimes difficult for other people to comprehend. In the 1950s, when I first became involved with electronic music, it had to do with tape recorders, which had just come into existence. The practicality of tape recorders was so appealing. We could do rehearsals without musicians being present, with the advantage that you didn't have to get the band together to try out a new idea. I began to acquire oscillators that had previously been available only to radio technicians, and built circuitry involving them."

"My teenage sons have no idea what a soldering iron is," she states. "They're involved with coding. It's just a different medium. They invent things on their own and that's what we did. I was a classically trained musician, a French horn player and pianist. Moving to another medium and working with electronics led to having a lot of materials that I could work with by the end of the 50s. I made some juvenile-sounding pieces, though some of these were so elaborate by the time they were processed – I had developed different kinds of modulation devices. Most of my teachers at the University of Michigan didn't know what the hell I was talking about, but I did connect with electrical engineering students on campus. The latter were amused by my efforts. They'd say, 'You're doing all this stuff that distorts sound and we're working to make sound reproduction as realistic as possible.' They were peers, guys my age who were drinking buddies, and they helped me a great deal. There was cross-nourishing of ideas, which was the only way we could work because there was no commerce for what we were doing yet."

Murrena lived in Ann Arbor through 1966, a watershed period in his life, when he co-founded the Cooperative Studio for Electronic Music and the Sonic Arts Union with composer Robert Ashley, as well as the now

historic ONCE Festivals of Contemporary Music. Launched in early 1963, Murrena describes the ONCE Festival (and attendant ONCE group) as "the first area coalition of diverse people who were outside of the academic institution, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in this case". He continues, "Most of the people I worked with were renegades, they didn't get along so well in the institutions. This coalition blossomed very fast because we were early in doing this. The Sonic Arts Union, the four of us – Robert Ashley, Ann Ulaner, David Behrman and myself – connected through the ONCE Festival. We brought Behrman and Ulaner from the East Coast to Ann Arbor. We brought in lots of people. I think that the first performances of Luciano Berio and Cathy Berberian were at the ONCE Festival. John Cage had never performed in the U of Michigan music department, though the arts and architecture people had invited him previously."

"We did two ONCE Festivals in 1965, one in spring, one in the fall. The momentum was underway earlier, in the 1950s, when Robert Ashley and I were working with a wonderful visual artist, Milton Cohen, who made a large theatre production with live electronic music in his loft. This included George Magnifico, a film maker whose work was scored by Robert Ashley. Already in the late 50s we were creating mixed media work. These were the days of black and white 16mm film, a medium which I studied. The ONCE Festival grew out of that sort, with the Sonic Arts Union springing up in turn from that."

Murrena describes the Sonic Arts Union as "four very different people working in four very different ways, and it was those differences that we admired. Because our individual musical directions were so distinct, we made a wonderfully balanced concert programme. We largely did our own work, with each lending performance support to the other's work. But these were not collaborative works – an important distinction to make, which set us apart from contemporaries like AMM in England or Musica Elettronica Viva in Rome with (Fredric) Rzewski and the others. I'm always happy to cite our coalition, as there are still people who are intimidated about belonging to institutions in order to get anything done."

During this period, Murrena unveiled his new creation: the Cybersonic console. Its prototype was a stationary sound-processing unit, but later he redesigned it as a signal processor that could actually be worn on a musician's body. "The Cybersonic console wasn't just a single thing, there were different kinds of them," Murrena explains. "They consisted of circuits that made possible the processing of acoustical sounds – the French horn in *Hompope* (1967), or the bandoneon in the piece *Mesa* (1966), which David Tudor plays. Whatever the sound sources, they were processed directly, live, by these Cybersonic circuits. A console was created for a particular piece. I just kept developing different things for them to do. I didn't call that a Cybersonic device at first. The name came later. The term is obviously related to cybernetics, the Greek root of which refers to the person who steers the ship. Nowadays I think they sell toothbrushes with that name. I never copyrighted it, but it appears in music encyclopedias and various reference sources."

What was his console for – ring modulation? Distortion? Pitchshifting? "All of that," Murrena laughs, "particularly ring modulation and envelope following. The principle of the Cybersonic console, to my mind, was that the processing was derived from aspects of the original signals themselves, with the dynamics of my performance on French horn changing the nature of signal processing, sometimes directly, sometimes delayed. For Horn [1966] I was sitting with the horn. There were two singers with me: Robert Ashley and

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SONIC ARTS UNION (WITH ALVIN LUCIER & DAVID TUDOR) RECORDING SESSION FOR SWEDISH RADIO, 1971; MUMMA & LEROY JENKINS PERFORM *COMMUNICATION IN A NOISY ENVIRONMENT*, NYC 1970; IN MARCHING BAND UNIFORM, FERDALE 1960; MUMMA'S ANN ARBOR STUDIO, 1962; REHEARSING WITH PAULINE OLIVEROS, 1985

George Giaccopo, both composers involved with the ONCE Festival. The two vocal inputs [into the Cyberonic console] and the horn input reprocessed each other so rapidly that it came out as one of the gristliest, ugliest sounds imaginable. The box sat on the table for that piece, as we were sitting like a small chamber music group. It was with *Hommage* that I began wearing these things. Mesa was done with David Tudor, who'd asked for a piece involving his bandoneon, then Merce Cunningham asked me if I'd do it for his dance company. So I knew there would be dancers onstage and the performers would be in the orchestra pit. Two consoles were on the table then, but with *Hommage* it became a piece of theatre, something that I wore. I was playing the horn in the early traditions of standing and moving about in the space. As I'd move about, the acoustic responses of playing a windhorn [the pre-voice antecedent to the French horn] would change and all of that was listened to by the console. At a certain point, the console would respond."

He pauses, noting, "I had an umbilical cord that I was wired up to loudspeakers onstage and I had to move about in a skilled manner, being careful not to step on the wires. We couldn't afford to go wireless in 1966. Besides, the space race between America and the USSR was very much in the air at that time. Seeing images of astronauts climbing out of space capsules tethered by life support cables kind of gave my umbilical cord symbolic weight. I toured with *Hommage* for four or five years, and it acquired an added theatrical sensation because of that visual addition, the heroic image – or embarrassing in that era, as I understand the Soviets did it first – of the umbilical cord. The mobility of it was just wonderful and I had been able to condense the equipment to the point where I could wear the Cyberonic console on my belt. Later on, the movements of Merce Cunningham's dancers were measured by accelerometers and other gear to trigger sounds, so I was able to acquire radio transmitters in place of the cabling."

By 1966, with five or six of the ONCE Festivals noticed up, those involved in their development started attracting attention from other institutions. Gordon Mumma took up an offer to work with Merce Cunningham's dance company. Robert Ashley went to Mills College in Oakland, California. "Essentially the momentum of the early 80s activity in the Ann Arbor milieu was such that reputations were established and people were invited to go elsewhere as groups or individuals," Mumma reflects. It was as much as a hot-house environment for New Music as the San Francisco Tape Music Center, whose history neatly parallels that of the ONCE Festival.

His tenure as composer-in-residence, alongside David Tudor and John Cage, with Merce Cunningham lasted from the summer of 1966 through the end of 1972. "That's not the only thing I did during that time," he allows, "but they had the priority for my artistic focus during that period. Others, like Pauline Oliveros or David Behrman, would be invited to participate at intervals."

"Merce commissioned a work of mine that required three of the dancers to wear accelerometers [belts which measured vertical and diagonal movements]. The side effects were fascinating. We utilized standard US radio broadcast frequencies to transmit the data from the accelerometers [to the electronic sound gear]. On some of our European tours, especially in Poland, the receivers began picking up police commands – these were the same radio frequencies received by the secret police. The audience would hear this in between the sound of the dancers' movements. This wasn't a king piece, but we were advised not to do it again. Such incidents were all part of using developing

technology, in this case one that was developing sociologically as well as politically at the time."

In the winter of 1968, the Merce Cunningham Dance Company was in residence in Buffalo, NY, shuttling back and forth between the State University of New York and Buffalo State College. Evoking a period of fervent creativity, Mumma notes that David Tudor's electronic composition *Rainforest* was first performed during that period. Shortly thereafter, Pauline Oliveros composed for the Cunningham troupe. But a high watermark of the Buffalo residency for Mumma and his Cunningham colleagues was their participation in the historically significant Reunion concert at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute in nearby Toronto, Canada in 1968. "Toronto got bubbling with a lot of New Music activity in the 1960s," Mumma recalls. "It was a little more stable, less innovative area, but there were unique individuals there including Udo Kaspermatz, who got cooking on the Reunion project."

Based around a chess game between John Cage and artist Marcel Duchamp, the concert involved musical contributions from Behrman, Tudor and Mumma. For Reunion, Lowell Cross – who collaborated with Tudor on various multimedia events – developed a chess board with a photoelectric routing mechanism integrated within the playing surface. A player would move a chess piece, altering the relationship between the input of the onstage musicians, Mumma included, and the output of the sound system.

Duchamp, that most enigmatic icon of 20th century conceptual art, and no mean chess player himself, was accompanied in Toronto by his wife Terrie. "She played chess as well," says Mumma. "Though she wasn't the killer that Marcel was. However, she could give John Cage a run for his money. John worked very hard at chess; he wanted to equal Marcel's abilities in that realm." The Duchamps flew in from New York for the performance, avoiding the dramatic border crossing experienced by Cage, Mumma and the US contingent, when that era's unrest and violent protest guaranteed the excessive scrutiny by Canadian customs of suspicious-looking musicians and their elaborate electronic gear. Ultimately, they were admitted to the country only after posting a hefty bond to cover their esoteric equipment. Having just acquired his first credit card, John Cage exhausted his first credit line as the group's guarantor. Mumma remembers, "A remarkable thing in working around someone like John Cage was that when resources were available, he used all of them. He was very generous about that. If it was possible, he'd bring more people into a project."

The concert itself was as eventful as the border crossing and just as unpredictable. Mumma recalls, "A lot of activities were completely beyond anybody's control, largely owing to the chessboard, which programmed a contour of activity for the whole performance. We were doing our own electronic modification, providing our own sound sources on the side of the stage. Easily three quarters of what we did was never heard, not even by the performers. I had headphones, so I could hear my own output. The chessboard ultimately determined what sounds were heard by the audience. You can't really define chess as a random activity – it's an intensely controlled activity. But the musical results in Reunion were unpredictable, if not exactly indeterminate. If John decided to move the queen in a certain direction, it might or might not have an effect on the music. It was a very interesting situation. The first game – with Marcel and John, Marcel walked right over him – was played to conclusion and a second game was undertaken between John and Terrie, who was not finished."

Reunion was staged a few months before Duchamp died the following summer. "Marcel wouldn't have

anything to do with money," Mumma reminisces. "He wasn't a professional chess player, but belonged to the international amateur world, an important distinction in that game. We were all being paid for Reunion, it was the de facto payroll manager. Marcel wouldn't accept his cheque, claiming 'I am an amateur'. Unaware of the critical distinction, I ventured that we were all amateurs [laughs]. Being paid for playing chess would have destroyed his standing in the chess community. He took the cheque, ultimately."

Typically for such events at the time, Reunion was impossible to categorize. Mumma sighs, "I don't know how to label that performance. Was it collaborative? Philosophically, politically or economically, perhaps, but in terms of all my diverse experience in performance – theatre, music, whatever – there was nothing like it. We had absolutely no control over what came out of the loudspeakers. What you heard was like the weather – a completely chaotic entity."

In the 80s, Mumma appeared to be moving from electronic composition back to writing for acoustic players. His peer Morton Subotnick seemed to be following a similar trajectory. "It might look that way," counters Mumma, "but you have to understand that I came out of the concert tradition. My upbringing was the classical German traditions – some French, some Italian – that existed in the United States. That's my whole background. The electronic music activities began in the mid-50s. I never separated electronic composing from concert activity, the two overlapped. Their identities became wildly divergent at times, but I never meant to eschew one for the other."

However, Mumma does concede that the ever increasing time required to master new software is sufficient motivation to think acoustic. "I learned music notation in second and third grade in school during the 40s," he avers. "That technology hasn't changed. I still compose waltzes for the piano. I still do that. The classical traditions take a lot longer to learn and they tend to be more stable. You can fool around with interpretation, but they're pretty much museum items. I don't use the term pejoratively. We redo them. I compose a lot of solo piano music. That's not so much known about my work. Everybody seems to know about the electronic stuff, with which I was more of an innovator, certainly, than with instrumental music. The thing about writing short piano pieces is that it's just pencil and paper work, rolling blackouts don't affect it. We have a super dependency on gadgets that are continually changing. But in the electronic music world, there are the people who use it strictly as an imitative instrument. I have no interest in that side of it. I always prefer clannetists to clarinet patches on a synthesizer. On the other side is where all hell breaks loose. You try anything. Now people interested in software design seem to inhabit this realm. That's still very much an innovative world."

"It's not that I'm getting too old," Mumma concludes. "The technological means of doing our work are rapidly changing. I try to move a bit slower so I don't waste my time relearning something that I can do perfectly well with an earlier way of doing things. So I do a lot of piano music. Publishers are finally getting interested in this – that helps – and performers too, but that's not the most innovative part of my musical work. It's not a value judgement, merely a comment on the different nature of that work. Extending the physical possibilities of any instrument involves a range of issues that don't seem problematic for those people using computers to compose and perform music. There's only so far you can go with performing on the piano before you destroy the instrument." (I live Electronic Music is our now on Zadok. Official Gordon Mumma Website: www.bramwasred.com/mumma)

BLOOD OF

RICHARD HELL'S BLANK GENERATION WAS A CLARION CALL TO 1977 PUNKS LOOKING FOR AN ANTHEM. BUT FOR THE PAST 25 YEARS THE NEW YORKER HAS DEVELOPED A CAREER AS AN UNDERGROUND WRITER ON THE EVE OF THE PUBLICATION OF HIS COLLECTED WRITINGS, AND WITH A VOIDOIDS CD RETROSPECTIVE DUE, HELL REVIEWS A CAREER THAT BROUGHT HIM INTO CONTACT WITH JOHNNY THUNDERS, TOM VERLAINE, ROBERT QUINE, WILLIAM BURROUGHS, TED BERRIGAN, AND THURSTON MOORE.

WORDS. ALAN LICHT
PHOTOS. JAKE WALTERS

A POET

A whole quarter of a century has elapsed since the release of Blank Generation, the record that put Richard Hell and The Voidoids on the musical map. From the ascending ruck of its opening seconds, to the discordant guitar clusters that open "Liers Beware!", to the mashed-up chords that constitute the solo in the title track, it's clear that it has a more advanced musical pedigree than the Ramones, The Sex Pistols, or any of the punk era's other leading lights. Further, it still hasn't been properly acknowledged as a forerunner of Sonic Youth's embrace of atonality. However, it's The Voidoids' willingness to drop a Chuck Berry riff into the bridge of "New Pleasure", for instance, that differentiates it from Television's Marquee Moon or Patti Smith's Horses, the other two NYC-sophisticated offerings of the decade. Television scaled incredible heights of musical interplay without lapsing into "Progressive", but their excitement was not traditionally rock per se. Horses may have referenced "Gions", "Land Of A Thousand Dances", and Huey "Piano" Smith but, rooted in Smith's earlier poetry readings with musical accompaniment, its overall tone is somber. Though Hell let his poetry roots show, he was also focused on having a group that operated from a firm rock 'n' roll base. Indeed, you can detect an immediate attitude difference in their respective cover artwork — compare Blank Generation's Hell baring his chest with "You Make Me..." scrawled on it, with Horses' depiction of Smith, photographed by Robert Mapplethorpe in a dean white shirt, black tie and a jacket draped over her shoulder. This may be the key to Blank Generation's initial acclaim and longevity; if standard issue punk was too lowbrow for some, and Patti or Television too highbrow for others, Hell's remarkable album fitted right in the middle.

What distinguishes Blank Generation is how The Voidoids' rock capabilities weren't realized at the expense of Hell's ambitions for his lyrics. On the contrary, collected together with his poems, notebooks, photos and essays covering the last 30 years, in the newly published book *Hot And Cold*, his songs read as well as they sing. "I don't see a progression," remarks Hell, when asked about the development of his lyrics, "I see forays, expansions, raids... into different territories. It's not linear, it's trying to do a lot of different things and trying to figure out how to do various different things well. I like how vicious it is." His comment just as readily describes his entire literary output.

Richard Hell was born Richard Meyers in Lexington, Kentucky in late 1949. A restless teenager, at the tail end of 1966 he left school and, funded by a brief stint working in a pornographic bookstore, moved to New York to immerse himself in the poetic life of the city. By 1973 he had hooked up with Thomas Miller, his guitarplaying best friend from high school who had changed his name to Tom Verlaine. Along with Delaware drummer Billy Ficca, the pair formed a group called The Neon Boys. The following year, with the addition of second guitarist Richard Lloyd, the group mutated into Television, making their live debut at the Townhouse Theatre in front of a stack of TV screens all tuned to different channels. A Hell song called "The Voidoid", whose title was derived from rowdy conversations in the local del where the group would add 'oid' to every name they called each other, gave early notice of his future intentions. And his contributions to a retrospectively released Neon Boys single on Shake in 1973. The tough post-Stones, guitar based sound, combined with twisted lyrics like "Hell I myself have got from on my lips, it's delicious, lady, won't you have a sup?", served as a blueprint for future Hell endeavors. The single is also the truest integration of his and Tom Verlaine's sensibilities — for

one, the latter's guitar playing never sounded so primitive as here.

Television went on to become kings of the first wave of New York punk — but without Hell. His only recorded appearance with the group is on the 1975 Little Johnny Jewel EP. The presence of two songwriters jockeying for pole position generated the friction that precipitated Hell's early departure. He left after Verlaine would only let Television record one of his songs, "Blank Generation", as part of a Brian Eno-produced demo for Island Records. He was briefly a member of The Heartbreakers, with ex-New York Dolls Johnny Thunders and Jerry Nolan.

Following his flirtation with The Heartbreakers, he formed The Voidoids with guitarist Robert Quine and Jan Julian, and drummer Marc Bell, recruited from Wayne County's group Electric Chairs. In 1977, with The Voidoids, Hell cut the classic Blank Generation, which was released on Sire. The album was so classic, in fact, that it fulfilled all Hell's ambitions as a rock artist, causing him to rapidly lose interest in continuing as a musician. They did make a belated, if somewhat culty, and poorly distributed follow-up, *Destiny Street*, in 1982. Recorded fast as a money-spinner, it's regarded by many — including the musicians who made it — as a letdown, but it's far better than its reputation allows. Quine's solos were never noisier than on "The Hud With The Replaceable Head" and "Downtown At Dawn", while "Time" stands as one of Hell's most affecting tunes. If its inclusion of three covers smacks of filler, they're revealing choices nonetheless. An obscure Kiniks cut, "You Gotta Move", and The Troggs' "I Can Only Give You Everything" solidify The Voidoids' 60s garage leanings, while Bob Dylan's "Gone, Gone, Gone" (from Planet Waves) mirrors the weariness of so much of Hell's own writing. That Blank Generation drummer Marc Bell metamorphosed into Marky Ramone, while his Destiny Street replacement Fred Maher became a studio producer, perhaps illustrates the ultimate difference between the two records. The former is a rockers' statement, the latter a studio construction, not in terms of production but in its raison d'être.

Whatever, The Voidoids' debut album alone is enough to justify their position in the punk pantheon. For his part, Hell is somewhat diffident about the claims some have made on behalf of The Voidoids' role in punk history. "I don't really have a view of that," he sighs. "When the subject comes up, I'll say something or other according to the situation, but it's always different and never too weighty."

Hell has concentrated on writing ever since, completing his first novel, *Go Now*, in 1996 and is currently working on a second one.

Set in 1980, *Go Now* concerns a cross-country journey undertaken by a punk musician and his on-again off-again French lover; as the 1988-89 notebooks included in *Hot And Cold* show, Hell is been taking a lot of road trips too — several journeys down South, trips to Italy, Australia and England, a raft ride down the Mississippi with Legs McNeil, a search for rock 'n' roll in Rapid City, South Dakota. But *Hot And Cold* as a whole feels like a road trip, as Hell investigates each medium like a new town, bringing to it an attitude shaped by drugs, sex, music, Jean-Luc Godard, Orson Welles, Arthur Rimbaud, William Burroughs, you name it. Being the source of Johnny Rotten's hairstyle, and any parallels between "Blank Generation" and The Pistols' "Pretty Vacant" or whatever, turn out to be just excursions on a much longer journey. "Blank Generation" was written two years before "Pretty Vacant" — and for that matter, a year before any of that stuff was called "punk." Hell recalls, "And 'Vacant' came to be because, as Malcolm McLaren said, he told The Pistols to write a song like 'Blank Generation'."



BELOW, TOP TO BOTTOM.
HELL & VERLAINE'S
LITERARY ALTER EGO
THERESA STERN; THE
VOIDDOIDS, 1977, WITH
ELVIS COSTELLO AT A
1978 BENEFIT GIG AT
NEW YORK'S CBGBs

At the same time, in the piece "I'm Not That Kind Of Girl," Hell realizes that the book tour he's on for *Go Now* bears an uncanny resemblance to the rock tours he's done — and that one of the women he ends up with on the road is in fact a former English punk girl he'd slept with a dozen years earlier. While Hell has transcended the rock milieu, "now a middle-aged, solitary writer, temperamentally reclusive, even neurotic and mild, compared to the driven, psychotic, arrogant musician of old," his work and personality seem to cry out for the rock star treatment, intended or not. In one journal entry he writes, "you can dream the world into life. I did it with punk. I imagined what should be, carried it out, and left it to follow its life." That this is the only mention of punk in the ten years and 400 pages of notebook entries presented here gives further indication of Hell's sense of "a mission accomplished." Still, in March Matador is releasing *Time*, a double CD which includes a slightly expanded edition of the retrospective *RIP*, originally only available as a ROR cassette, plus a CD of Voidoids live tracks from 1977-78.

"I had this funny realignment of my perceptions when I finished the book," Hell tells me in the living room of the Lower East Side apartment he's resided in for the last 25 years. "It's an isolated work, as a novel is or a symphony, it's self contained, that's what I thought I was making and felt that I'd done. I think it works as a book, not as an anthology, and not like a reader. It's a kind of hybrid mutant thing, but it's cohesive and it's like a mentality manifested in print, a sensibility. I really didn't think of it as exploring my 'punk' press, or as being 'historical' at all... But then the first reaction I see to it is someone describing it as a punk memoir, and I was really disappointed [Dennis Cooper referred to it in a review of Dee Dee Ramone's memoir as a supreme example of what a punk memoir could be, although he'd never actually seen it]. But then, when I was proofreading the book, I saw how you could see it that way. But the only reason it is that way is because I am me, who got called a punk, after I was me. I was me first, you know," he laughs. "So my work is my work. It's incidental to me that it's being classified as a certain kind of literary or musical movement or something. I didn't set out to join something. I did it, and other people did things that had a certain amount in common with it and it got this name attached to it. So it's inevitable, it's pointless to fight it."

"What I wanted to do," he continues, "was gather all the stuff that was in the files, a few pieces of which have come out in small editions, basically what the book turned out to be, all the lyrics, notebooks, essays, and a really carefully selected set of poems and then drawings and photos, carefully arranged. In the original there was no chronology or separation by genre. It's all mixed, and that was my original, very ambitious idea — to have it be just this flow that I very carefully organized to work."

It starts with poems written between 1969-73, within a year or so of Hell's flight from high school in Delaware to New York's Lower East Side. In those days, the poetry scene's leanings toward rock, such as they were, certainly did not reflect his own. "I thought the poets' taste in music, for the most part, was really comic. Even the ones I really respect, like Ted Berrigan. I know there's one place where he refers to The Incredible String Band [laughs]. There's Aram Saroyan's *Beatles* book, where it's one Beatles's name on each page, it's four pages long. I didn't want to know about the Beatles. Most of the New York poets were going around with flower teas and were all exalted about marijuana and putting on Buffalo Springfield records. I never moved in the poets' crowd anyway. It was the same with Patti [Smith] — she was apart from them."

But it was the mimeographed poetry journals and small press poetry books that provided an impetus

and a template, when Hell and Verlaine ditched poetry to form a group together. "What I brought to music, from what I'd learned and seen from the underground poetry world, was that DIY approach," Hell affirms. "That's what was really a turn-on in NYC in the late 60s and early '70s, these poets rejected the traditional way of life as a poet of publishing in academic journals and literary magazines and getting jobs as teachers, because they were like street people and they didn't want that future and didn't like that kind of writing, so they took this approach of, 'We'll just do it on a budget we can afford and make books that have the spirit that excites us, and the larger publishers can come to us or not.' And often the big publishers did come to them, just as in music when we said, 'We're not gonna continue to live the expectations of the music books in order to make records for them, we're gonna make the records we want to and they can come to us or not.'"

To illustrate his point, Hell pulls out a mimeographed, staple-bound copy of a 1974 pamphlet called *The Drunkard's Boat*, a version of the original Rimbaud poem by Ted Berrigan and illustrated by Joe Brainard. "That's such a gorgeous book by any standard, and it was done overnight for 20 bucks, on impulse," he asserts. The earliest NYC DIY "punk" singles, Patti's "Hey Joe," Television's "Little Johnny Jewel" and Hell's own "Blank Generation" [the sleeves of which he printed himself in his apartment] take on a whole new significance in this light, as extensions of downtown aesthetics rather than another music industry trend.

Besides *The Neon Boys/Television*, Hell's other major collaboration with Tom Verlaine was a 1973 book of poetry called *Wanna Go Out*, credited to Theresa Stern, and published on Hell's Dot imprint. Stern was in fact an imaginary author, represented visually by a superimposed photo of Hell and Verlaine in make-up and wigs. Perhaps this was a nod to Marcel Duchamp's alter ego *Rose Sélavy*? "It was more a conscious nod to the kid next door who liked to start fires in the basement," responds Hell enigmatically. "Rose was an artistic whiz, Theresa was a wild freak. Rose's alter ego was Duchamp's works. Theresa lived in Hoboken."

Wanna Go Out collects some of the poems from the book, plus an interview with Theresa (Hell, in fact by Mary Harron [who went on to direct *I Shot Andy Warhol* and *American Psycho*] from Punk and a piece on *The Heartbreakers* from New York Rucker. Theresa made a comeback of sorts in the 80s. "I wrote a script about Theresa Stern," he says. "There was a time in the mid-80s I decided the next thing I wanted to do was to make a movie, so I wrote this script called *The Theresa Stern Story*. It was set ten years after the book was written and it was about a guy in NYC who had discovered the book that she wrote and gets fixated on her. He works in a used bookstore like the Strand and he has a band, and the band is getting popular but he's unhappy with the way everything is developing. He's fixed on her as being pure and decides that he's got to find her, and he's met the guy who published the book, who he's always glibly avoided her. So he tries to track her down and the clues he gets pan out and he finds her, and the movie's about this night that they spend together. I ended up shooting 20 minutes of it. Tom did the music, I ended up playing the role of the guy. It was a really ecstatic experience making the film, but it was my student film, there was a lot that was really great about it, and there were other things about it that were more to me. I would have had to have been completely single-mindedly persistent for five years to get it made. Work on it to the exclusion of everything else and I wasn't willing to do that. I still have the idea that I want to make a movie, but I still have the idea that I want to make another CD and I don't know if I'll do that either."





Hell has never resumed the identity of a poet, however. "I haven't been prolific in poetry," he admits. "I basically stopped when I started doing rock 'n' roll, most of the impulse got channelled into songs. After I stopped doing music I started doing a lot more fiction and a certain amount of journalism. The poems have come when something really intense is going on. Some time before I die I hope I make a resolution to write one a week or something," he laughs. "I used to do these New Year readings at St Mark's Church and I always wanted to have a poem for that, so I'd make myself write one and I'd always really like them. It's just requiring it of yourself."

Hell's Website, which he maintains himself, contains a selection of links to poets' work, amounting to a statement of his principal influences. The Web has proved the ideal medium for a career such as his, a cult figure whose MO remains fluid enough to bob into the wider public gaze occasionally (his sporadic movie appearances include a cameo with Madonna in *Desperately Seeking Susan*; with Nick Zedd in Rachel Amodeo's study of houselessness in New York, *What About Me*; and in Zedd's schlocky horror-Western *Geeq Maggot Binge*). "It's so cheap and easy to put up all this information," Hell enthuses about the Web. "It's just irresistible. It's such a cool medium because it's absolutely immediate, the moment something occurs to you you can do it, make this information available. And it's so cheap to store that it can just stay there, not go out of print like magazines or books. It's not only the information that's of interest to everybody in the world that's available to everybody in the world; now it's all the information of interest to anybody in the world that's available to everybody in the world [laughs]. That's a big difference..."

The Matador double CD leads off with several cuts from his tenure in The Heartbreakers, and the contents of the familiar RIP cassette. The second disc offers a full Voidsides set recorded at London's Music Machine in 1977 and an FM broadcast from New York City's CBGBs in 1978, both previously unreleased. The four Heartbreakers cuts on RIP show Thurston and co still in post-Dolls party mode, on versions of "Love Comes in Spurts", "Chinese Rocks", "Can't Keep My Eyes On You" and "Hurt Me". But it was with the Voidsides, particularly through the slashing yet jazz-inflected guitar playing of Robert Quine, that the implied menace of his lyrics found its aura. In equivalent, indeed, his songs didn't refine their own musical identity until he got to lead his own group. Consider the evolution of "Love Comes in Spurts". The original Neon Boys track with different lyrics is simple enough on the verses, but then each chorus has a different chord progression, plus a proto-"Marquee Moon" guitar break in the middle. The Heartbreakers' basic powerchord rock take still has Johnny Thunders' thumbprints all over it. It's the Voidsides version on Blank Generation that conveys a real sense of horror. This is the one that "murders your heart", with its frantic opening and the meistei sounding revision of the chord sequence to date. By aligning himself with Quine, a Velvet Underground disciple who's well-versed in both 60s and 80s rock, and is also a devotee of Bill Evans and mid-70s Miles Davis, Hell found the most fitting musical correspondence to his lyrics, which put the harsh and the familiar back to back - check the juxtaposition of "Erase my face" and "I want you so bad" in "Another World". Such moments make you understand how Blank Generation might have fulfilled all Hell's musical ambitions.

On Time's second disc, this is simply demonstrated by the brazen live takes of Blank Generation-era material. Hell has described the London show as the "most violent" the group ever played. To top it off, Johnny Rotten comes out at the end of the set, exhorting the crowd to demand an encore. (In a piece

written about the film *Sid & Nancy*, Hell further describes how Rotten later came backstage and told Hell he had a big nose!). Encore they did, with The Stones' "Ventilator Blues" - "partly calculated to offend the punks," Hell notes. The CBGBs set also boasts a Stones cover, "Shattered" - the only time they performed it - which is stunning in its resemblance to The Voidsides' other material. For "You Gotta Lose", they were joined onstage by Elvis Costello.

The night itself was a benefit for St Mark's Church. "St Mark's Church had a huge fire in 78 and basically burned down so we had a benefit at CBGBs to raise money for rebuilding the church [home of the Poetry Project]. We recall, 'I was headlining that night, and I know, I don't know if it was before or after we toured together, but he was in town and came down to the gig and then he ended up doing the song with us. The audience was full of poets - Ginsberg was there, Ted Berrigan was there, Anne Waldman. Berrigan I'd never met but I was a big admirer of his, so I thought I would blow his mind, and that's what's going on at the beginning where I said, 'Let me tell about what I did today I drank a Pepsi and took a pill,' that's all references to poems of his. After that he was my best friend," he laughs.

"I haven't written many songs in the last 15 years," he continues, "but when I look at them I see how they all have very different forms but they're very strict. You'll have the weirdest rhyme schemes, like ABAC EBEC or whatever, but they'll follow that very strictly from stanza to stanza, it's funny. There's a lot of alliteration and internal rhyming, they're very carefully put together."

Hell did not produce much music during the 1980s, although RIP contains four tracks recorded by an ad hoc group put together for a 1984 New Orleans appearance which included Metiers drummer Ziggy Modeliste. "My road manager and friend Jimmy Ford grew up in New Orleans and was always inviting me down there," he recalls. "People there are generous. Also there are a lot of good players - music's built into life there, I was at a place where I didn't really have a band and didn't know what to do with myself and I accepted Jimmy's latest offer and was given a house with a studio in it for a couple of months and was introduced to musicians."

But he has made two significant returns to recording during the last decade. The first was the early 90s Dem Stars project, instigated by Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore. "I didn't pay any attention to music in the 80s but I always thought that band has gotta be good because the name is so good," Hell laughs. After Sonic Youth covered his Neon Boys tune "That's All I Know Right Now", he got in touch with Thurston, who proposed the idea of a group with Richard singing two punk covers, Unnatural Axe's "The Plug" and Stikemen With Rayguns' "Christian Rat Attack". A 20 minute jam on "You Gotta Lose" and the original "Dem Stars Theme" completed the triple single, released on Moore's Ecstatic Peace label. Titled with the results, Hell suggested a full length CD composed in the same style as the single. They would jam in the studio, Hell would then take the results home, write lyrics and record the vocals the next day. He's still disappointed that he didn't have more time to do the vocals right, but "sometimes I get this vision of how someone will listen to it in 40 years and think it's good as long as it's completely forgotten so they can discover it [laughs]. We just had different approaches, those guys are all about winging it and for me it's about working out parts." His other musical return was to record a new song, "Oh", in 2000 for the Music Blitz Website, with the original Voidsides line-up.

More than music, sex and drugs appear to be the most common subjects in *Hot And Cold*. The few

pieces on musicians are posthumous reflections on heavy drug users Peter Laughner, Sid and Nancy, and Johnny Thunders. Even an anecdote about a former Hell drummer is footnoted with the fact he subsequently Obed. There's also a highly researched piece on the history of the criminalisation of heroin, and a reminiscence of William S Burroughs, where he takes pains to point out that the author was an addict to the end (not to mention several instances in the notebooks where Hell admits to relapsing into heroin use himself). As for sex, well, there are graphic drawings of genitals, photos of pantless lovers (and one nude photo of himself), a story about having sex with a deer and numerous journal entries and poems. "I'm nervous about the sexual material in the book because of the coverage that it's going to get, it's dominated by that. It's such a charged subject that it just tends to overwhelm everything around it, especially in America, it's still Puritan," Hell laughs.

"You can't get to sex," he muses, "sex is bigger than you, it contains you. How can you contain it? It's interesting to have insights into it but there are always something further to be said, so it all gets sort of futile. After a while things like that are more the subject for art than for intellectual analysis. I've got my own blind spots and hangups in my own psychology, I'm not saying that I'm kind of enlightened about what the real role of sex is in people's lives, but I don't hesitate to deal with it when it arises in my mind, and just as with most people it arises fairly often [laughs]."

Hell's appreciation of The New York Dolls may provide a key to his written fascination with sex and dope - in a piece on Johnny Thunders, he writes that the group spoke to the kids "in a language of drugs and sex". "They were true to it," asserts Hell, "that was the common ground everybody had and they didn't make a big deal about it, they just shared it with you, you had that in common with them, it was taken for granted the way you can with a friend. It was great because it disposed of all the grown ups who disapproved of that kind of behaviour and also of the outsiders who would have to be cute about it, it was real. And that's what I always wanted to do with music. The second Television poster that I made, the heading was "True Life Presents Television", that was really the purpose. "The hell it live it it's approach - 'I'm going to see Burroughs' definition of relaxed lunch - 'when one sees what is on the end of every fork'. In the piece 'My Burroughs', Hell comments on the late writer's "fearless unattachment. He has no vested interest in how things are or his own response to them". This hints at the crux of *Hot And Cold*'s title, one Hell considers appropriate "because there was this extreme, in your face erotic stuff, and then there was some cruel but basically indifferent attitude going on too".

Although it's arranged in chronological order, the variety in *Hot And Cold* is staggering - topics alone range from US military presence in El Salvador to poet Bill Knott in running away from home as a kid. Travel, drugs, the Hell/Thurston Stern aliases, the moves from poetry to rock 'n' roll and beyond. *Hot And Cold* ultimately serves as an index to a life of departure. Hell's aesthetic can be summed up by his desire always to be leaving, always shedding the skin he's in. Recall the opening of "Blank Generation": "I was seen let me out of here/before I was even born." Or the opening of a piece of prose called "Huck Hell & Legs Sawyer On The Mississippi": "I'm forever amazed to how much fun it is to leave." Hell concludes. "Just to leave. Arriving has its points, but leaving is inexhaustible. And what better opportunity for leaving could there be than a drift down the river, because what does a river do, but leave." □ *Hot And Cold* is published by Powerhouse. Time will be released by Matador in March. Website: www.richardhell.com

YOU
MAKE
ME



LUNATIC FRINGE

TANGENTS: WHETHER REAL OR IMITATED, THE RAW, UNMEDIATED EXPRESSION OF MAD ARTISTS HAS ALWAYS EXERTED A SPECIAL PULL IN THIS PERSONAL TAKE ON THE MUSIC INDUSTRY'S AMBIVALENT RELATIONSHIP WITH LUNACY. BEN WATSON GOES IN SEARCH OF THE 'TRUE VISION' OF THE INSANE, FROM SKIP SPENCE AND WILD MAN FISCHER TO SCHOENBERG, MESSIAEN, THE KLINKER CLUB, ADOLF WÖLFELI, PUNK AND THE MAD PRIDE MOVEMENT.

ILLUSTRATION: NON-FORMAT

Madness is a hot commodity in music. In 1999, Sundazed made a splash by rereleasing *Our*, originally made 30 years earlier by Alexander 'Skip' Spence. *Moby Grape's* frontman had just spent six months in the psychiatric ward of New York's Bellevue Hospital after drugs and black magic had transformed him into a pyjama-clad mad ashen. It's easy to understand *Our's* popularity: Spence's winsome folk rock is recorded with a directness that suits the late 60s fad for unplugged and lo-fi campfire confessionals, an American Nick Drake. Like Charlie Parker's wrecked West Coast sides, or those recorded by Billie Holiday at the end of her tether, there's ample room for sentimental projection in Spence's pauses and imperfections. However, such 'actuality' is by no means the exclusive province of the certifiably insane, as any listener to the Sun, Chess, Goldband or Inoue back catalogues knows: maybe in a streamlined pop world, 'madness' is just a name for nonconformism and grit.

In his review of *Our* in *Rolling Stone* on 20 September 1999, Greil Marcus wailed lyrical. He was convinced it wouldn't sell, but told readers to buy it before it disappeared forever. Marcus describes the album's winning lack of polish by saying, "Sometimes his playing is about as good as Wild Man Fischer's." This refers to a notorious album, *An Evening With Wild Man Fischer*, released the same year, in which the issues of empowerment and exploitation were stacked up in multiple layers of provocative irony: a premier Frank Zappa production, released in the same clutch as his own *Uncle Meat* and Captain Beefheart's *Trout Mask Replica*. Wild Man Fischer had been committed to mental institutions several times, and this was his bid for stardom, a double album in a gatefold sleeve. Today, despite pressure from the Wild Man Fischer Fan Club, the Frank Zappa Estate won't license a re-release, calling it "a poor example of [Zappa's] production skills". Actually, it's exemplary: suddenly not only Frank Zappa's own music, but also the relationship of madness to music – and to workaday 'normality' – start to loom clear. The album is a model of sceptical realism: madness is treated as a social phenomenon rather than a mystery.

The critics at *Rolling Stone* hated Zappa (Lester Bangs praised *Hot Rats*, but that was it). They wanted golden longhaired minstrels, or chansonic protest singers like Bob Dylan, not some Dadaist antipropaganda generic miscegenations which exploded in the 90s. Dave Marsh called *An Evening With...* "a particularly vicious example of Zappa's penchant for sadistic social commentary. The results are brutal, not funny except to the emotionally immature and the socially callous, and would constitute a deleted embarrassment in recorded history if the record industry had any shame."

Marsh's idea of 'talent' – a commodity Fischer appeared to lack in abundance, since his tunes are the kind of 'non-songs' made up by five year olds, or adults noisily regressing in their bathrooms – blinded him to Zappa's intent, his curiosity about the revealing aspects of 'mad' expression, its implied critique of the limits of official culture. Zappa's interest in the creativity of the insane had not been seen since the work of Hans Prinzhorn, the progressive art historian of the 1920s. We hear a street recording of Wild Man Fischer selling songs for a dime in front of the Whisky A Go-Go and the Hamburger Hamlet on LA's Sunset Strip. Zappa had Art Tripp overdub percussion, turning the chaos of shouted exchanges, laughter and traffic noise into a Dada suite. Tripp's needlesharper rattles, bell chimes and marimba pops add a sinister, broken clock dimension, recalling the accompaniment of Arnold Schoenberg's *Ferret Lunatic*, which launched 20th century musical modernism by using the alibi of madness. Atonal pointillism is used to open a window on the unconscious, questioning the assumption that

THE TOP
WILD MARY KISCHER
AFTER YOU HEAR THE ACTION
THE BEATLES

HEAVY
BEATLES
THE BEATLES

THE ROLLING STONES

AND OTHER "BEATLES" CONDOYAN

THEY TALK THE MOTHERS

THE MOTHERS THE MOTHERS

THE MOTHERS THE MOTHERS

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TOP: ALEXANDER 'SKIP' SPENCE BOTTOM: HUGH METCALFE
AVOIDING A STINKER AT THE KLINKER

the listener is above the drives, pain and fantasies of poor Larry Fischer. When Fischer says he has voices in his head "fighting each other, it's like a disease!", the commotion writhes in our skulls too.

At Fischer's request, the sleeve carried a diagram, showing the relative status of stars in contemporary pop. It's pretty astute for a madman. At the bottom we find Zappa, Chubby Checker and Fabian - and Wild Man Fischer "before he met Frank Zappa", in the middle there is Johnny Cash, and Fischer "after he met Frank Zappa". At the top are The Beatles saying "hello down there" to The Stones, Elvis, Cream, Mozart, Hendrix, Tiny Tim and The Mothers. Whizzing to the very top, up above The Beatles - "after you hear this album" - is Wild Man Fischer.

The fantasy is really not so far-fetched. By dint of the repeated broadcast and media accolades granted those who generate profits for powerful interests, pop is replete with musically restricted mediocrities who have somehow been transmogrified into untouchable stars. The human need for silly ditties - previously supplied by family singalongs and playground chants - is turned over to a voracious commercial machine, replacing people's everyday fun by the illusion that only bought product can hit the spot. If you list the topics dealt with by Fischer - freak commercialism, autism and time, social conflict, desire and repression, Hollywood morbidity - his treatments are both more realistic and more varied than most pop albums. When Zappa arranges a "fancy version" behind Fischer's yelping voice, the strange combination of consummate arrangement and amateur vocals has the charm of The Monkees. When Fischer tells us that he was put in an insane asylum for singing at work, he introduces a social dimension which abstract confrontations of madness and normality never examine. Why work to earn money to buy albums by people who are just like yourself? Only those repelled by Dada's project of art by non-specialists will dismiss Wild Man Fischer's record. Those who turn on to Wild Man Fischer, on the other hand, make a friend for life. Larry Fischer went on to make two LPs for Rhino Records. While lacking the Dada self-consciousness of Zappa's production, his energy and charm endure. "Don't Be A Singer" was a heartbreaking attack on his treatment by the music industry. Nevertheless, unlike the 57 varieties of nihilist formalism thrown up by the art avant garde, *An Evening With Wild Man Fischer* is a truly inexhaustible document. Madness is dismantled as a category; facile assumptions about mental illness and 'normality' are challenged by stark criticism of the hurt inflicted on the psyche by the star system, and of the alienation and unfreedom of regular wage labour.

It is no accident that such heavy themes should be raised by Wild Man Fischer and his obsession with music. Exaggerated attention to music has long been deemed a species of madness, as if any pursuit not centred on words must be deemed insane. When satirist Billy Jenkins named his London based unit of moonlighting jazzers The Voice Of God Collective and coined the slogan, "Music is the religion", he expertly nailed the peculiar mix of certainty and proselytising zeal of music obsessives. We believe our favourite music is crucial, important, true. Such certainty defies the pluralism and tolerance of polite discourse, asserting unmediated response and inner conviction over logic. René Descartes got it wrong: the location of the modern, secular, enlightened soul isn't the pineal gland. It's music.

Mad Pride is a new civil rights movement. It promises to do what the Gay Pride and Black Pride movements have done, but this time for those suffering from the stigma of mental 'illness' (past or present). Given the affinity of music with unreasonable truths, it's unsurprising that Mad Pride has an active musical



MENTAL AS ANYTHING
(TOP TO BOTTOM):
JIM MACDOUGALL'S AURAL
GUERRILLA, A BELGIAN
COMPILATION IN AIO OF
MENTAL HEALTH, THE MAD
PRIDE BOOK, WILD MAN
FISCHER'S NOTORIOUSLY
DERANGED FIRST ALBUM

wing, Mad Pride benefits have been performed by Alternative TV, Ceramic Hobs, Hystera Ward, The Astronauts, Fish Brothers and Alabama 3. Last year saw the release of a 2D track compilation, *Nutters With Attitude*, on Mad Pride Records. In Berlin, under the banner of the Irren Offensive, radical psychiatrists and rebel patients hold public trials. Anti-psych intellectuals steeped in the works of Michel Foucault denounce crimes committed by the state's therapy police. In Hackney, they release a punk album.

To be fair, Mad Pride has also issued eloquent and barbed leaflets denouncing corporate drug profiteering and New Labour's viciously repressive legislation on 'sectioning' (psychiatric confinement). In London, it has organised protests, pickets of Parliament and Archway Road's 'suicide bridge', and published an anthology of tales by mental health patients (*Mad Pride: A Celebration Of Mad Culture*, a volume I helped put together). Crucially, Mad Pride is free of the odourless whiff of condescension which pervades too many mental health initiatives.

Mad Pride uses punk's black humour to break with the cap-in-hand courtesy of government-approved mental patient organisations. Instead, to cite its manifesto, it intends to "celebrate madness in all its forms as a means to all-out social revolution". Although no one mentions André Breton, Mad Pride is really a street version of surrealism. The curious prong between British pop and the Parisian avant garde documented in Greil Marcus's *Lipstick Traces* has been possible because surrealsists and Situationists, intellects focused on images and theory, ignored music: Mad Pride is a 'prong' to follow the 'prong' which Malcolm McLaren, Jamie Reid and The Sex Pistols inflicted on the rock-rejecting Situationists.

But how 'mental' is Mad Pride music? The most affecting track on the CD is "Communication Failure" by Alternative TV, where Mark Perry's trembling voice – its blunt honesty hovering on the edge of a 'mad' rejection of social status – reveals disconcerting truths. Liverpool's Ceramic Hobs play sets of Stooges covers in costumes appropriate to the Antennae Jimmy Simons fan club; their track was "written by silent partners, underwritten by a graffiti" and "produced in a slimy cave by JE Marquiano". Amongst some keening folk, DfT Techno and incongruous Country, it's the punk rock that makes most sense. Punk's reversal of values, the heretical notion that the outcasts of society are its true prophets and judges, finds an authentic expression in Mad Pride groups like Ceramic Hobs, Shockheaded Peters and The Jetsons.

Responding to an anti-stigma campaign launched by the World Health Organisation, the Belgian government declared 2001 the Year of Mental Health. *Psychoasis*, a CD of pop tracks, was issued by Het MIs Verstand in Antwerp, a "non-profit organisation founded by Belgian creative minds engaged in mental health care". "Inspired by the inner world of the wrong tracked mind," both music and package – sponsored by Janssen-Cilag, KBC Bank & Verzekering and the Cera Foundation – lack the scrofulous rage and laughter surrounding Mad Pride. *Psychoasis*'s madness is light and cute, unperched by underdog pain or protest: you're never skewed on the pin of your listener patronage, Lydon-style. Two versions of Napoleon XIV's 1966 novelty hit, "They're Coming To Take Me Away, Ho-Haaa" – by The Shockheaded Peters on *Nutters*, and by Rob Vanoudenhoven (a Belgian TV personality) on *Psychoasis* – graphically illustrate the opposed meanings that contrasting social positions can impose on an identical lyric. Punk gives Mad Pride the prophetic, insurrectionary quality of Ian Sinclair's "sectioned carpet-chewers" in *Lights Out For The Territory*: "Folks who live with the daily horror of seeing things as they actually are."

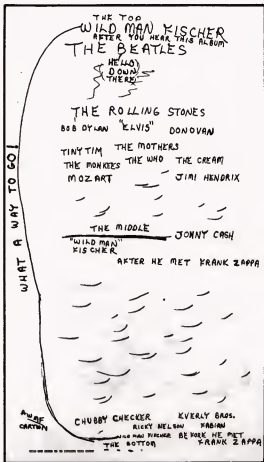
One contributor to the Mad Pride volume, Jim MacDougall, made an impromptu performance during

an Alternative TV gig at London's Union Chapel back in 1999. MacDougall's presence makes an audience sweat, gives it a taste of actuality. His group Aural Guerilla recorded a two CD set 'out of virtue and boredom, rather than expecting huge sums of money and status in the music world'. They disbanded in 1999 when "the vocalist simply became impossible to work with". On the CD, MacDougall's reactivity is so attuned to the chugging, low key punk rhythms, it's as if they were invented for the cadences of his voice. Like the speech recordings of William S Burroughs, you're lulled into his stories, then brought up short by how violent and disgusting they are. Is it him, or the way he's been treated? Is he what the tabloids call an "evil influence"? The listener wriggles on MacDougall's artful hook with a sense of started outrage, staring at the singer's Polaroid of his own sawn feet on the cover, printed in sperm-tinted yellows. Now hawking a solo CD, MacDougall declares that he is disappointed with the "opportunists" at Mad Pride and is looking for "something else". The congruence between Mad Pride and punk suggests that punk's proletarian critique of the spectacle isn't faded, merely suppressed.

However, rockist populism can be musically restrictive. If Mad Pride's "celebration of madness" were genuinely pitched against the capitalist star system, would it only favour genres already heavily promoted in pop? When early 80s chartbound posters Madness named themselves after a Prince Buster song, the self-styled 'Nutty Boys' merely added to a long tradition in carnival and music hall. The only 'attitude' to be derived from Madness's singer Suggs – today a TV personality – is entertainment as escape valve, a confirmation of capitalism's work/leisure split. The phrase 'mad for it', used to death in today's youth-targeted adverts, derives from Manchester's Hacienda scene of the early 80s. The drug-fuelled hedonism of 'Madchester', so different from The Fall's sceptical sneer, lacked the aesthetic or political sals to resist commercial banality. What would a Mad Pride outfit sound like that genuinely didn't care about the commercial success that allowed its madness to warp the form of the music? Maybe it would sound avant garde...

The 20th century musical avant garde was launched by Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* in 1912 (thus predating Luigi Russolo's *Art Of Noises* manifesto by a year). It was quite explicitly mad, being a suite of texts sung spoken by a moon-touched lion. Schoenberg's compositional devices – demented muscobeat chimes, unravelled melodic lines, vacant repetitions, clashing tutti, sped up hysteria, puckish vocalises – might have become clichés of musical dementia, but performances of the score can still be shattering, especially if interpreters refuse smooth academic correctness and realise its sonic shocks. If performances involving mouth improvisors such as Phil Minton, Vanessa Mackness or Shelley Hirsch "sound like *Pierrot Lunaire*", it's not because they're pastiching Schoenberg. His attention to historical necessity – the gradual accumulation of chromatism in symphonic music, the increasingly deritualised, one-off nature of compositions themselves – meant opening the door to affective sonority, timbral specificity and clashing juxtaposition: a violent subversion of tempered, sonata form logic.

The innovations of *Pierrot Lunaire* were later formalised as 12 tone. Schoenberg's score-based proposal for superseding classical tonality. However, *Pierrot Lunaire*'s free atonality can be reduced to no schema except an expressionist discovery that madness – a complete dislocation from tradition, an immediate confrontation with the musical materials – packs a charge lacking in traditional procedures. This development had parallels in the visual arts. An art



THE WORLD ACCORDING TO WILD MAN FISCHER

history graduate named Hans Prasthom was appointed by the Heidelberg Psychiatry Clinic in 1919 to make a collection of the art of the insane. Paul Klee and Max Ernst were both impressed by his published catalogue. Many motifs in modern art derive from their respectful attention to insane modes of expression. The Nazi accusation that both 12 tone and modern art were "degenerate" targeted this link. Before they rounded up the trade unionists, socialists and Jews, the Nazis executed the inhabitants of mental homes because they were "economically expendable". Meanwhile, the "Jewish/Bolshevik" modern art that found urgent messages in the art of the insane was banned.

Another 20th century innovator, Olivier Messiaen, was a Roman Catholic and no revolutionary, yet he expanded modern music by a traditional resource of the insane: he listened to the birds. The realisation that nature is a living terrain of intention and communication implies that human society is not different in kind. Consciousness is simply what happens when one species of animals begins to develop socially and so requires language. This insight can be devastating to Kantian common sense, which erects a metaphysical barrier between humanity and 'non-signifying' natural forms. Flowers have been depicted for centuries, but by transcribing the sound of birdsongs, themselves as unique and varied as flowers, Messiaen asked an openness to natural beauty that bordered on madness. Try finding a park, lying down and listening to the birds: you'll weep that anything can be so beautiful, and yet so alien to how our everyday lives are currently organised. Yet Messiaen, close to madness as he was, also applied the anti-repetitive principles of 12 tone to rhythm, and so invented serialism at the end of the 1940s, a procedure which has been denounced as "hyper-rational", "cerebral" and "merely theoretical". How to explain this paradox?

Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze set up a stark opposition between rationality and madness, between oppression and freedom. Their dualism cannot map Messiaen's practice. The point is that, like any effective scientist or artist, Messiaen did not choose between madness and rationality, but pursued Freud's programme of "where I'd was, Ego shall be": a dialectical investigation of the hitherto unknown. He opened his ears to the birds, but by transcribing them and inserting their songs into his music, he brought them into the realm of musical understanding and collective event. Likewise, his experiments with serialising rhythm generated bizarre new beauties. Sonic events spun out from his maths like surreal coral wreaths. The lesson Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen derived from Messiaen was that mind and matter are not forever sundered, the intellect and emotion forever opposed. A rational grasp of the structure of music can body forth new emotions and experiences. The feelings engendered by these innovations are so vivid they become criticisms of a society locked in the grey habits of social ritual.

Karl Marx argued that humanity is not something external to material nature, a divine essence like the Platonic or Pauline soul. Following Darwin, he called labour power an evolved but natural force. Serialism likewise refused a dualism between humanity and nature, finding 'natural' beauty in 'artificial' interruptions of harmony and rhythm. Its techniques allow genuine dialogue with other musical cultures and non-exploitative use of new technologies like recording, amplification and sampling. Western musics which reject the innovations of serialism, on the other hand, tend to reduce exotic materials to mere coloration. When John Coltrane proposed his ecumenical World Music, he found he needed both atonality and serialised rhythm. When Carlos Santana attempted an ecumenical World Music without

serialism, he produced New Age kitsch. Like Pynchon's "art of the insane", the madness of Schoenberg and Messiaen was the dialectical turn against Western tradition required for a genuine (rational?) approach to materials like the Balinese gamelan or spoken word on tape.

In this connection, Graeme Revell – a New Zealand psychiatric nurse who founded the Australia/UK based industrial group SPK, named after *Schizosistisches Patienten Kollektiv*, the German mental patient protest group which turned to terrorism in the wake of Baader-Meinhof – issued a tellingly flawed experiment. He attempted to realise the "insane scores" of Adolf Wölfl, a psychiatric patient whose work was fomented by the 20s avant garde. By using then newly available equipment, including the Farlight keyboard, Revell turned Wölfl's ideas into harmonically music, reducing his madness to exotically raw material. He also did the same with bush recordings of insects. As reproduced in the booklet, Wölfl's collages and scores (one includes a Campbell's soup tin, three decades before Warhol) look fascinating, but Revell's interpretations are too smooth and controlled to sound like anything but post-Eno Ambient.

Was Revell 'exploiting' Wölfl's madness? In New York, a Mad Pride delegation pointed a showing of the Pynchon collection, denouncing it as an exploitation of schizophrenia. Should we be indignant versus Revell? Moral outrage is a blunt instrument in aesthetics. Revell's elevennotes may evince reactionary notions of artistic transcendence, but they're full of respect for the insane. Certainly, one should point out that he was mistaken to use pretty harmonies: Wölfl's scores aren't 'beautiful', they are wrecked and hurt and strange, a wild concatenation of elements closer to Dada than the church. Religious fragments in Wölfl's collage scores gave Revell an excuse to indulge modish Holy Minimalist effects, manoeuvres which sound gratingly commercial today.

Italian music theorist Marco Maurizi defines the dialectic of modern art as "mediation between the immediacy". He is using Hegelian terms to describe the joy unleashed in a musical performance when 'something happens', when a poetic situation lifts people out of repetition and ritual. Mediation describes established methods of organising sound, the equipment and skills of musicians and sound technicians. By immediacy, Maurizi means recognition of the absolute specificity of any social occasion (something defined by the classical repertoire, which freezes certain works, often themselves revolutionary in intent, and presents them as timeless Platonic 'forms'). When Freud developed psychoanalysis, he did not apply generalisations or world statistics, thus reducing his patients to objects. He examined specific case histories, developing his theories to fit each case. The insistent 'immediacy' of modern music requires similar treatment.

When Captain Trip Records, a Tokyo label run by a Krautrock freak, issued *Gyastates* in 1997 – an album recorded at Kogari Temple by Sei-soo, defined in the sleeve notes as 'intellectually handicapped' Japanese priests – its intentions might have been either empowering or exploitative. However, Sei-soo music develops and flows, implying some kind of collective freedom and awareness. Still, the Sei-soo priests' name use of rock 'n' roll rhythms could teach The London Improvisers Orchestra a lesson or two about unoppressive pulse. Though no guarantee of musical relevance, madness and naivety can open doors closed to minds fixated on quality and sophistication. On the other side of the Pacific, San Francisco group Volvox are fronted by a singer named Ant-Honey who suffers from brain damage, but the musical technique of the group is advanced and reckless enough to regress to his vocal actuality with conviction.

Experiences of madness are as varied as the individuals themselves, so in order to explain how madness and music might self-illuminate in ways that go beyond Mad Pride's agit-prop punk, I shall have to stoop to professional mode. In 1983, I went mad. The most striking aspect of my delusions was an apocalyptic sense of significance: everything and everyone around me related to my most urgent libidinal and political impulses. There was no waiting, no concept of 'yesterday' or 'tomorrow', no debt to the past: I lived in Stokauschen's 'moment time'. There was no passive reception of ideology, no hierarchy of media power, everything was dialogue, every social transaction was visible and public. TV was not simply a receiving device, it also passed on signals from your living room. The newscaster wasn't at Broadcasting House, he was the old bore with a blue suit and grey toupee four doors down the street, pontificating about world events from his sofa. At the height of my mania I was sectioned for two weeks (as is typical in such cases, the worst experience was the year of depression that followed). Since my recovery, I've found that free improvisation is the only musical form which regularly reminds me of my 'mad' insistence on immediacy, for an event in which everything has significance, and no person or shiny doorknob or shout in the street is excluded from the total composition. In this respect, it's significant that the two musicians who span the worlds of Mad Pride and free improvisation are Mark Perry and improvising saxophonist Lol Coxhill, both of whom are noted for uncanny sensitivity to venue-specific situations.

Hugh Metcalfe, who runs the Klinker Club in North East London, believes that free improvisation is useful therapy for mental patients, and treasures his experience of playing both inside and outside psychiatric institutions. However, although the group he runs with poet Bob Cobbing, Birdyax, is far 'madder' than anything in Mad Pride's roster, it results from a worked out critique of the alienation and passivity instilled by commercial media.

Metcalfe's notorious references to body noise might be deemed Artstuck-like, but his seaside postcard sense of humour debunks any recidivist 'art' glamour. "Many a time after gigs I've had people say, 'Keep on the medication,'" he remarks, "but of course I'm totally straight. What's called 'madness' – I don't use the word – can be heightened sensitivity to people's reactions. I was a day patient at the Whitlington Psychiatric Hospital. I had a breakdown after my son was born in 1986. Anyone can end up in psychiatric hospital. Very good psychiatrist, Dr Dalton, who was very much into therapy and not giving you medication. Drugs are a quick way out for overworked doctors, talking is better. I'm now back to music, running a club and being extremely busy. I met brilliant people in there. Also distressing – seven friends committed suicide, some 'inside', where were musicians and teachers who were living 'outside', supposedly. I ran a music therapy course with the staff nurse, and we had fantastic sessions in the common room, 15 people improvising, basically. Music's an easier way to communicate than talking. People who can't have relationships but love music come to the Klinker, make friends. It's like an extended family." After speaking the preceding sentences into my tape recorder outside the Vortex, a jazz and free improvisers' club in Stoke Newington, London, where he had been showing films and playing guitar with improvising pianist Vyan Weston, Metcalfe felt the need to howl a Cobbing-style sound poem into the chit night air.

Involved in his own campaign against psychic alienation, Metcalfe is suspicious of the sensationalist and populist thrust of Mad Pride. "They should lobby doctors who prescribe drugs and suggest alternative treatments – their choice of music is patronising," he

contends. True enough, two marquees of ee-ayyddo punk units in relentless succession at the Mad Pride Festival in Cissold Park, London in July 2000 did make me long for some genuinely mad free improvisation to interrupt the ritual. However, Mad Pride gigs are special. It's hard to play the rock game of celebrity wildman or sonic terrorist in front of an audience of self-confessed nutters. There's an atmosphere of non-hierarchical fun and civility I've not experienced in many lowdown rock venues since the early 80s. Nevertheless, though the impact of punk boneshakers like Underdog and Los Paralyticos is undeniably therapeutic, the collective thrill of thrash is more like relief from the threat of madness than an artistic crystallisation of its de-lowering highs.

A dialectic between enlightenment and unreason structures serialism and free improvisation is not the only way of relating madness to music. Since Elvis Presley brought the rattlesnake-clutching madness of rockability to the mass market, pop music has been ridden with sensationalist lunacy and psychic causality. Yet if there's one lesson to be learned from Mad Pride, it is that the mad are not some exotic type, but unfortunately who are completely involved with psychic forces which should be thoroughly familiar to so-called 'sane' minds. Art plays with such forces or becomes a stilette exercise.

Records by the genuinely certifiably insane provoke heated debate in which claims of empowerment are countered by accusations of exploitation. In other words, the row is a subset of the debate that surrounds all pop music, where (at its best) singers and musicians without access to social status or capital are invited to flaunt themselves in public to make someone else a buck. Can one really distinguish between the naive 'madness' of the juvenile rapper, promoted the world and then put in an impossible situation regarding drugs, money and guns – and who winds up with a bullet in his head – and the mental disintegration of Syd Barrett, Skip Spence and Rory Erickson? The pop industry denours naivety and wrecks lives: what's to distinguish between 'certified' madness and the mindbending notion that the petty amusements of Somerset Richman's "Road Runner" could make its singer a star?

A useful rule of thumb might be the singer's ability to face the world rationally, but in a world where 'economic rationality' entails starvation, privatisation and weapons fairs – what's rationality? As Vyan Weston puts it, "Who's mad? Someone who walks around with a dustbin on their head, or Lynon B Johnson dropping bombs on Hanói? Star Wars is madder than anything. RD Lang's ideas were good stuff, but they were suppressed by behaviourism and Tavistock Institute reward/punishment theory in the 80s. The Klinker has got it right. It will remain pure and fertile in its madness, it can't be co-opted like rock."

The Klinker Club and Mad Pride use music to challenge psychic oppression in contrasting ways. If they're not exclusive alternatives, it's because, despite the musical differences of those involved, they face an identical cruelty, the same social system. Lol Coxhill and Mark Perry's redefinition of music as situation, a singleton collective event, is one way of bridging that gap. Another possible bridge requires theoretical input. By understanding what we're up against – namely the commodification and alienation of musical experience under capitalism – Mad Pride might recognise the pertinence of musical freedom, while improvisers might find ways of making their hatred of commercial duplicity more graphic, poetic and politically blatant. As Guy Debord notes, "It's only when we fail to comprehend the enemy that splits appear in our camp." □ Mad Pride: A Celebration Of Mad Culture (edited by Ted Curtis, Robert Dewar, Esther Leslie & Ben Watson) is published by Spare Change

Charts

Playlists from the outer limits

Selten Gehörte Musik 15

Various
African Accoustic Vol 1 - Guitar Songs From Tanzania, Zambia & Zaire (Original Music)
Various
A Musical Anthology Of The Orient
Aphrasier/Saxophone (Manicaphon)
Anten Bruch
Rote Motor (Alga Margher)
Don Cherry
Muz Second Part (DYS Actus/Khassia)
Fan Club Orchestra Japan
1001: A Space Odyssey (Yama Coop Disc)
Goodiepal
Narc Beaches (Stagg)
Jan Gierle
Seven (Dina)
Joseph Svelly
Entierloo (Entierlohl)
Peter Brückmann Sextet/Quartet
Nagles (Unheard Music Series)
Resado & The Lost
Play Struck & Snell (Tockeys)
Shedability
Earth Versus (Rough Trade)
Sun Ra And His Solar Myth Arkestra
The Solar Myth Approach Vol 1 (DYS Actus/Khassia)
The Electric Family
Manicaphon (Jedak)
Zoo-Funkelstein
Acid Head/LSD (Chooosa)

Touching Extremes 15

Richard Lohrhardt
Ten Thousand Shades Of Blue
Experimental (Intermedia)
Thierry Zebellouff
Of Zab Vol 2 - The Fantomack Beds (Atonal)
Musique Of Safety
In Opposition To Our Acceleration (Die Stadt)
Ako Hodel
Verbal Brownish And Other Works (Fylkingen)
Bernhard Günter
Time, Dreaming itself limits ceased
Miror
Prout Row Centre (Die Stadt)
Various
Strings With Evan Parker (Emanant)
Floyd Roth
Cleaning (Tradik)
Reinold Kays
Carten Der Lachs (RRR)
TMXX
Difficile De Comprendre Dans Le Brai (Selection)
Biota
Invisible Mail (RaR)
Evan Parker & Keith Rowe
Dark Raga (Polaris)
John Dawson & Francisco López
RAW (At Quanta/Absolut)
Big Black
Ethnic Passes (Mutabil)
Southwestern Quail
On Uncertainty (Steephead)

Continuous Drift 14

Charlemagne Palestine
Aloy (Alga Margher)
Oron Amichai
Suspension (Touch)
Slam Of The Lid
Music For Nimesse Quide (Sademental)
Scotzi Politi
Slunk Blue Bulogne Y' IDT/Rough Trade)
Mike Valido
Yhn (Mantrix)
Organum & The New Blockaders
Plus (Ridout)
Gruppo Di Improvvisazione Nuova Musica
Consensus
Musica Si Suona (Argomenti)
Vienna Art Orchestra
The Minimalism Of Exit Seize (Hologram)
Alice Coltrane
Transfiguration (Warner Bros)
Vas Der Graf Generator
Pawt Hearts (Charmus)
Van Deresene Organization & Christopher
Suspension (Rita Lactam)
Christine Kabisch
Ver Sticker (Schnee RZ)
Quell
Propheas (Quartinaas)
Moribund
The Sounds Of Nature (Kaur)

The Office Ambience

Various
Improvvised Music From Japan (Improvvised Music From Japan)
Rhythm & Sound
Rhythm & Sound (Rhythm & Sound)
Richard Hef
Tone (Metastor)
New Flash
Understanding (Big Dada)
Push Button Objects
3607 Romances (Chocolate Industries)
Alice Coltrane
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Jazzon Tour 2002 (Beat)
I, Beano
I, Argentina (Pigout Productions)
Johelle Lander & Kazuo Sawai
Organic-Mineral (In Sol)
Grandmaster Flash
The Adventures Of Grandmaster Flash (Stout)
Bright Posture
Cinema A La Radio (Seawave)
Keith Rowe & Kim Cascone
With Hidden Sound (Newfound)
Barry Guy/Marilyn Crispell/Paul Lytton
Olepsy (Emanant)

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We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, clubs, DJs, readers, etc. Email editor@thewire.co.uk



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Soundcheck

February's selected CDs, albums and singles



Dread from the waist up: the only known photo of Rhythm & Sound's Mark Ernestus and Moritz Von Oswald, with former vocalist Tikiman (crouching)

RHYTHM & SOUND RHYTHM & SOUND RHYTHM & SOUND LDC1043 CD

Mark Ernestus and Moritz Von Oswald, who first emerged from the Berlin Techno scene as Basic Channel, stood apart from the surge tide of mid-90s hard minimal Trance in their willingness to slow down and dismember their own sound, to the delight of an ever-increasing audience. Though both artists work in different styles on different labels, it is as Rhythm & Sound that their Rothko-like ability to define vast space with minimal means (and beats), and their affection for the textures and aleatory editing of reggae have met its best effect.

Rhythm & Sound's first album, 1998's *Showcase*, was issued on their *Burial Mix* imprint and collated the duo's initial five singles in order of release. Von Oswald and Ernestus took a monomaniacal approach to cultivating the atmosphere that was their signature. From source code created by programming minimalist approximations of mid-70s Jamaican cultural rhythms, the duo spun gold from signal processing, moulding the intangibles of filtering, reverberation and echo feedback to their best advantage. That the music was first issued on 10" dubplates was of no small significance to the R&S crew. Like the mid-70s dubs of songs recorded at Lee Perry's Black Ark studio, the R&S "versions" freighted the identically effects-laden humidity of the songs from which they were derived, with *Aside* vocalist Tikiman allowed tarmac, momentary turns. Every track was slightly over six minutes in length. Recalling Perry's phaser-shrilled mixes, the studio "air", being mostly layers of tape

hiss, itself became a component of rhythm, the only difference being that Rhythm & Sound dispensed with extra musicians, the better to hear the treated essence of that air. Built to close tolerances, stripped to its essential working parts (right down to the packaging) and entirely hypnotic, *Showcase* was a dub purist's equivalent of a Dogme 95 film.

After three year's wait, its sequel has arrived. Rhythm & Sound is unmistakably forged from an equally well considered blueprint, but its agenda is wider still. Both the (un)title and the CD's murky cover art (a grey-on-black trail of vapour, or is it ganja smoke?) point to a further darkening of the duo's music. Although this disc collects singles released over past couple of years, it has the cohesion of an album conceived as a whole. Earlier Basic Channel EPs contained few tracks, but were equivalent to full albums in length; these had to be severely edited for release on CD. The Rhythm & Sound tracks now resemble those earliest Basic Channel works in form, often running to epic lengths in workouts involving not rhythm but what by now is the R&S signature: solong on effects boxes. "No Partial" opens the set; the track was initially paired with "Higher Field Marshall" by The Walters Band, a melodica-led instrumental issued in October 2001 on the Pk label. "Mango Drive" also surfaced as a version side, R&S's take on "Mango Walk" by Brooklyn reggae producer Bulwackie. Few contemporary electronic artists – fellow Berliner Stefan Betke (aka Pole) is one exception – have a better understanding of reggae's spirit than Rhythm & Sound. However, for Von Oswald and Ernestus, as for Pole, slowly but surely Jamaica is

Richard Henderson hears the Berlin dubmasters spin gold out of studio air

slipping over the horizon as the source of a governing paradigm. With each succeeding track, even minimal rhythmic underpinnings are deleted by degrees, replaced by encroaching levels of noise and effects output. Ambience for its own sake – albeit a sinister, rumbling ambience – increasingly becomes the order of our anxious day.

The only vocal track is the deceptively titled "Smile". Vocalist Savage – Tikiman, whose voice was all over *Showcase*, seems to have dropped out of the picture, although he has cropped up on scattered forays with Tarwater – surfs the slow tremolo of white noise, ominous kickdrum trumps and isolated chord stabs, his phrasing resembling Prince Far I's reading of the Psalms. The R&S crew, adding slapback echo and an overall tone contour modelled on a basement's darkest corner, successfully distil the frightening, impalpable essence of early roots classics like *Psalms Far I* on this cut and throughout the balance of the disc. "Imprint", the inky chimera occupying the closing spot, nearly dispenses with rhythm altogether for 17 minutes. A vortex of cumulative machine hiss and subaqueous keyboards predominates, its surface broken only by the occasional spray of tightly spaced echo reflections from those drum hits that manage to rise above the murk.

In an era of antiseptic Powerbook creations, it is heartening to hear artists coursing through the digital domain making a conscious decision to steer for the messier outer limits of sound, and doing so without adding to the glitch glut. As hard to pin down as the smoke it most resembles, Rhythm & Sound is very dread indeed. □

BADAWI SOLDIER OF MIDIAN

ROD RUTABAY CO
BY JEROME MANGITTELL

Rod Mense's latest album as Badawi offers more intense sonic pressure than his first two recordings for RSO, *Andean Sound* (1996), and *Jouralun Under Fire* (1997). Both these albums earned him comparisons with drummers King Sunny, Lee Perry and Augustus Pogo, but for this release he has stepped up the righteous, no-nonsense ruckus. Recorded in July and August of last year in New York, Soldier Of Midian tears along at a pace, dominated throughout by the skilfully treated, intensely layered, Middle Eastern polyrhythms that underscore the album's geopolitical themes (see *The Wire* 216). This may be what usually gets labelled as 'World Music', but its fiercely controlled energy more often recalls the relentless adrenaline rush of a Jeff Mills DJ set.

Zirb, bencir, ad, diebucka, bellis, cadasters and drums are all played by Mense himself, with the much Middle Eastern musicians supplying dulcimer riffs and other live elements. These components are thus apparently electronically reassembled and processed through a raft of effects, although it's to Mense's credit that the album doesn't feel remotely like a studio project. Many tracks involve wound single for bar melodic phrases, which gather momentum through repetition and subtle variation. Dub bass enters the mix at several points, but its largely subordinated to a judgement of polyrhythms which rattle, shake, squirm and pound along—more often than not in a frenzied whirlwind dash with time rather than the metronomic 4/4 pulse of most Western dance music.

"Moving Still" resembles an aural snapshot of the chaos of drummers, bakers, cars and wayward pedestrians that is the Qemais el-Fra in Marrakech at rush hour. "Stampee" chugs along like some medieval steam train, bashing out a groove that wheezes along with all manner of grit and dissonant impact, and some fairly raw and forceful rhythms. "Dance Of The Day Me" (As The Festival Of Koush) wears a soft, dubby baseline with a percussive undercurrent that has no end at the speed of handstop (and probably would not sound incongruous in the mix with, say, an Ed Rush track). Towards the end of the album, "Final Blooming" serves up the most sustained train beat of all, steadily piling up the tension to breaking point.

ANDREW BARKER & DANIEL CARTER DUO COMMON SOLDIER

CHIRCO RECORDS LP
BY DAVID KEENEAN

For more than three decades now, multi-reedist Daniel Carter has been connecting the dots between various high energy disciplines, chasing the fire through groups like *Quinteto Jazzes Test* and *Willie Parker's Other Orchestras In Music*, and stepping outside for collaborators with members of *Lo La Temp* and *The No-Black Blues Band*. Very much a team player, it's rare to catch him naked as bare, where he's silhouetted against Andrew Barker's thunderous drum kit. Barker, who's also in *The Gold Spindle Band* and *Parker's Little Holy Creation Music Orchestra*, has stayed close with Carter over the years.

Common Soldier is an instantly limited pressing

from the same Italian label that's been reissuing Masako Kawabata's early solo works. Taking up side one, "Common Soldier 1" is a 21 minute face-off with Carter switching between tenor and alto sax. Although the duo take a while to heat up, ten minutes in, the degree of non-linear movement is clear. Making like Ray Williams circa 1970 to Lunch, Barker fills infinitesimally small gaps with delectable counter-rhythms, while Carter plays up and over the tip with cool, lightning aggrag and sweet, honeyed cries. "Common Soldier 2" is even better, as Carter's baritone melodies alternate with Barker's splashy cynical wit before he goes headfirst into the bowels of the kit for some tough rhythmic shuffling. They hit the home straight with a throat-grabbing run, and then some and some swooping, bold nuzz, accelerating with every pass and forcing Barker to grow a few more arms, before the record dips to a corrieo "Get From Ipanema's" tempo. Side two ends with "Common Soldier 3", a slowly altered, redemptive cut between fire and balise. The recording's pace and unfussy, with the tenor and tubby drums sounding great throughout, and you can follow Carter round the room with your ears as he dances natively from speaker to speaker.

LUCIANO BERIO VOCE

ECM 170948 11558 CD
BY TOM PERCHARD

In 1964, the vibrant and musicalistic Aldo Benini introduced Berio to some field recordings of music from Benini's native Sicily. The composer's response was *Voce*, a 30 minute piece for voice and orchestra that works with material drawn from several of those songs. A year later, Berio rewrote the piece for a dance company, reordering the parts and replacing the orchestra with a single percussionist. That piece, *Naturale*, is also heard on this CD, and is separated from its progenitor by six of the field recordings themselves.

Voce is subtitled *Ten Songs In*, after a piece written 20 years earlier for the soprano and Berio's wife, Cathy Berio-Benini. Her's chosen of the original field melodies is less literal than in the earlier work, though. Instead, Ben treats the transcribed material as a compositional point of departure rather than finished music. The voice soloist on this recording is ECM regular Kim Kashkashian. Transformed into Berio's "singer", she has much of the song material to herself, spending out long lines of collapsed melody against the orchestra's rich, surprisingly Belgian backdrop. As a piece very much in the concert tradition, there's a certain amount of struggle between vocal and orchestra — The Radio Symphony Orchestra Wien, under Dennis Russell Davies — which is extended to an uneasy dialogue between folk and art musics.

Newer one for any satirists of his material, Berio treats such tensions as a source of dramatic strength rather than structural weakness. However, fitting between fragments of song, the piece's rather episodic quality results in an uncharacteristic lack of dynamism and impetus. Certainly Kashkashian does her best, engaging with the music in a dramatic, actorly fashion. But she's undermined by the rather bland cultivation of Gave's orchestra, which sounds as indolent as its date ought.

Made in the 1990s and 60s, the accompanying field recordings are hoarse and

gritty, a long way from the Italian vocal tradition as we might think of it. The recording of a male singer from Palermo featured in *Naturale* forms an occasional but powerful presence in Kashkashian's 20 minute duet with percussionist Robyn Schalkowsky. Here, the roles of *Voce* are reversed: the voice fights against the recorded folk music, only truly breaking into song in the singer's absence.

THE BOHMAN BROTHERS A TWIST FOR ALL POCKETS

ROBBIN HENSON CD
BY ALIEM COWLEY

Adam Bohman, who also surfaces as a member of Morphogenesis, and The London Improvers Orchestra, here prepare violent, homemade straps, baldricks, objects, rubber bands and other Jonathan plays music percussion, strings, rods, cones, feedback packs, oscillators, hopepots and autotunes. The instrumentation tells a substantial part of the story. The Bohmans' music involves improvisation that owes no debt to jazz. Musicians coruscate or Cope's Cardigan Music are more likely to spring to mind (and a coruscator of that) there are any allusions to everyday objects and activities imbedded in the flux of sound. Deliriously non-musical (in the narrow sense), *A Twist For All Pockets* does without those obliging cues supplied by familiar techniques, forms and progressions.

These are really 'composed' pieces, in accordance with the terms of a performance or as a consequence of subsequent editing or contrivance, but they give off a strong sense of being confronted with the raw data, without assistance from misp, wush or compass. There's lots of seeping, squelching, shreds and clanging; small sounds compressed, lighted, often ferocious activity compressed, tightly packed. Some passages are transferred straight from live playing. Despite the studio manipulation of materials elsewhere, the results fit in a much wider worldview. There's no sense of the duo as it is a dual but brothers beat the continuum. The process, since underway, has to be followed through. It's like witnessing some improbable industrial process whose significance never becomes entirely clear. Gertrude Stein, a writer deeply interested in cues to recognition and the excitement of doing without them, wrote in her story "Melancholy" of the fascination of a railroad yard, and who a child loves all the noise without fully understanding why it occurs. If you're suitably receptive, there's something of that appeal of "mystery and movement" to the Bohman Brothers' arcane activities amongst everyday objects and autotunes.

BURNT SUGAR - THE ARKATRA CHAMBER THAT DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU KNOW

TRUSCO PROMO 38CD
BY PETER SHARRO

Three CDs of Prog soul drum 'n' bass fusion. Nothing is not exactly a description to get the heart beating and the palms sweating, but that's exactly what this magnum opus from journalist/Black Rock figurehead Greg Tate's chamber arkstra is, and, despite the visions of (burnt) sugar plump fumes dancing in your head, it's actually pretty good, at points mindblowing. Of course it's too long; of course it needs its *Two Macero* to top it down; of course it's buried

by too much reference (even though Tate should know better, too often Burnt Sugar rots for the sound of Funkadelic, Miles, Sun Ra rather than the process). But, of course, it's intelligent, comical, spiritual and shows a textual awareness although missing from way too much black music right now — I love Timbaland and Organized Noise as much as the next person, but there's only so much hi-definder, plasma screen R&B pre-gangsta you can take.

It starts with Volcano Groove. The Sirens Return, 74 minutes of the Star Line cars band with afro playing lounge music in a veranda designed by Yves Tanguy. Fractured live drum 'n' bass gives way to scolded jazz goes way to fortifying. Eastern European cello and piano rondo gives way to post-hall punk-Hendrix. And that's just the first track. Then the yesteryear landscapes come into view before more magma-brained guitars frazzle and frazzle, over which a pretty limp MC with a pure Brooklyn accent claims he's from Uganda. Two *Living Colour/Firefly* State feedback solo legends bring things back to earth before a 22 minute version of "Castles Made Of Sand" goes off in search of Denny Highway.

Volume Two, The Crepusculum, is much less built but no less schizophrenic. "Lunch With Ahrn" shifts between Carlos Santana jamming at Orian to Peter Dinklage playing a jacks, while the following "Xin, My My Heart" has a psychotic episode where the group imitates the live guitar gypguy of these arch-Cosmos Moby Hatchard. The expected Polka black hole electrico vibe then takes over with more chamber junking and a fabulous, Heize-nu-nu version of Curtis Mayfield's "I'll Take A Hell Bellow".

Once there, *Subversive Since Antiquity*, though, is where Tate's grand synthesis really takes off and becomes more than the sum of its parts. The opening track, "Subversive Since Antiquity Part One", is simply extraordinary. Where much of the preceding 120 minutes feels like a connect the dots jumble, here the dubby, spacey beat is seamless, the references seamless and the 'back to the future' smitck a flag to rally around rather than a crude, empty gesture. "Subversive Since Antiquity Part Two" seems to be for House with Outkast's "Boss" did for Morris Bass and just about everything else. "Part Three" shows that all you need for a crumpling groove is relentless forward motion not relentless guitars.

With the N+E+H+D project maybe seeing the light of day, Mos Def's Black Jack Johnson (a supergroup with Doug Wimbush) set to release an album and this three hour epic, maybe this year the year Black music has its long promised breakthrough. More likely, though, it'll be shorted media hype to camouflage the guttural lurking behind those ten page features on hip-hop rock schticks like Limp Bizkit and Kid Rock. And if you've been here before and That Depends On What You Know sounds like the same of some of you, just remember that it was Tate who first articulated and crystallised this particular aesthetic stance.

CHICKS ON SPEED/ KREIDLER THE CHICKS ON SPEED/ KREIDLER SESSION

CHICKS ON SPEED CD/CHICKS CD/CHICKS CD
BY BEN BORTHWICK

This excellent 12" and CD EP sees Chicks On Speed continue their series of collaborations

Biba Kopf hails a new ten CD treasure chest of Japanese experimental music



Box of tricks: Ten CDs encased in paneled wood; Kazuo Imai; Arvi Yoshida

VARIOUS IMPROVISED MUSIC FROM JAPAN IMPROVISED MUSIC FROM JAPAN (M: 1982)

Hunched over his guitar in Off Limit, a compact art space in the Tokyo neighbourhood of Yoyogi, Taku Sugimoto is listening hard for the right moment to add another noise to his parsimony of coaxed taps, clunks and featherweight sighs. Forced to acclimatise itself to the near inaudibility of Sugimoto's performance, the ear brings into focus the exterior sound picture framed by the lengthening gaps between events: the surprising stillness of the Tokyo night outside, offset by the hum of a helicopter receding into the distance. But when a clacking woodblock rhythm slowly circles the building, no one knows whether it's part of the performance or not. Turns out it's the local fire warden warning the neighbourhood to turn off their heaters before going to bed.

It's an extraordinary performance where nothing really happens, yet you walk away with some memorable sonic images of a still Tokyo night and the fire warden clacking out his warning just the same as he did 100 years ago. Best of all is how Sugimoto's performance leaves you hearing things differently. That experience carries over to this terrific 10 CD survey of improvised music from Japan. The set's five double CDs in cardboard gatefold sleeves are housed in a handsomely designed box made from light yet durable paulownia wood – just like the chests Japanese women traditionally use to keep their finest kimonos in, because its resin repels moths. Some of the most attractive music inside similarly retells tradition for contemporary use. *Improvised Music From Japan* is breathtaking in its scope, ranging from the Tsugaru shamisen improvisations of Michio Sato to the 50-*Mac* plieup of Yasuhiro Otani. In between it takes in the several silences of Taku Sugimoto, Sachiko M

and Toshimaru Nakamura, the full-on noise of Osaka veterans Incapacitants, Ground Zero (here pared down to Otomo Yoshihide and Boredoms vocalist Yamatsuka Eye) and Atsuhiko Ito; the free jazz of Masahiko Ohtsuka's Gnu and drummer Shoji Hano (with reeds players Peter Brötzmann and the late Werner Lüdi); and digital scrabblers, DJs and sampler artists like Tetuzi Akiyama, Skust and Otomo again. The set includes some remarkable women – namely Phew (as half of skewed sampler duo Big Picture); Haco, whose tirelessly cheerful invention either makes her Alvin Lucier's long lost daughter or a the children's TV host of your worst nightmare; and the astonishing vocalist Ami Yoshida, whose evocative yet self-effacing description of her electronically modulated vocal track "Hoooooon" – "The sound that came out was like 'the sound of a donkey trying to clear its throat'" – does scant justice to the way the electronics help her dredge up an unsettling shamanic voice enrobed with the filth of ages.

Meanwhile, the presence of Kazuo Imai is the box's connection to two of Japan's most exemplary figures. Imai studied with the late guitarist Masayuki Takayanagi and Taj Mahal Travelers' Takehisa Kosugi. His three contributions, including one for the large improvisation *Marginal Consort*, reveal that Kosugi's lessons, especially, weren't wasted. The *Consort* piece is a diverting *Calexico* Zen flux of sounds squeezed from unmusical materials. The use of non-musical elements is the improviser's failsafe way of constantly returning him-ir herself to a primitive state wherein the act of creation is charged with wonder. That feeling of awe permeates a remarkable solo piece, which soundwise barely raises itself from the ground as Imai enacts a Creation ritual using a stone board, steel ball, bamboo blocks, shells and so on. The resulting stoneground sounds conjure an image of a tiny human figure at the foot of a mountain. Its primitive longings are also found in the

postwar Japanese dance form of Butoh, while its naturalist leanings have their parallel in the Japanese aesthetic tradition of using 'borrowed scenery' (the way a traditional Japanese garden would incorporate the view of the mountain behind it, for instance). Except none of the sounds is borrowed, they're all Imai's work.

Glibly drawing parallels with traditional Japanese aesthetics or indeed making any general remarks about 'Japaneseness' must be deeply annoying for Japanese artists, especially for the improvisers here, many of whom operate at an international level.

However, the 'borrowed scenery' analogy feels right for Yumiko Tanaka's wistful, lovely five-part gdayu shamisen improvisation "Music For A Four-And-A-Half Tatami-Mat Room", captured in a home recording happily coloured by extraneous domestic noises. Though she modestly claims to represent only a small section of Japanese improvised music, its contributors form a large enough cross-section to identify some of the issues that exercise it most. The most significant is a desire to erase memory from music and start anew. It's directly signalled in the titles of percussionist Yoshimitsu Ichikawa's "Method For The Fourth Note, Which Is Not Actually Played" – essentially an electronic modulation of sustained cymbal tones – and Kazuhisa Uchihishi's "Invisible Guitar". It also runs through Kazuo Imai's aforementioned primitivism, Sachiko M's "sampler without memory" sinewave oscillations, Toshimaru Nakamura's non-input mixing desk inventions, whose combination of weird tonalities and invertebrate motion are strangely ravishing if they catch you right, and Boredoms' guttural Seichi Yamamoto's "Lost Appetite For Wanton Guitar Noise". Ironically, given his pioneering of tumblant without cartridges and sampler without memory, Otomo Yoshihide signals he's ready to let the past run back in with his vibrant blues guitar improvisation "Soundtrack, The Blue Kite". □

with some of electronica's finest. Together, Kreidler's orchestration and the Chicks' delivery have strong overtones of The B-52s, and the first three tracks are, in actual sound and sentiment,

three tracks are original vocal and instrumental non-sequential collages done in a faintly similar style. In "Frequent Flyer Lounge Song", the syncopation and vocals are dissonant, freely, using a stepped down palette of spartan percussion and arrangement that demand a Thomas Berkmann House mix.

However, the EP's jewel is "Where The Wild Roses Grow", a cover of Nick Cave's duet with Kylie Minogue. The original's deeply romantic narrative has it that lasting beauty exists only in the truth of death. It required the complexity of both parables to find redemption and

transcendence in the narrative's brutal ending. Telling it from a different angle, the Reader Checks replace lush instrumentalism with the muted irregularity of a kick drum, atonal strings and the pitter-patter of static that soaks it in alienation. And they not only reverse the singing riles (though without altering the pronouns), they also process the voices to sound like speech patterns decoded from radio frequencies. Remorse is replaced by tragedy and pain, as glitches break up the poem's linear and spectral voices try to hide in the far corners of the stereo spectrum. In the process they have found a new level of pathos in a Nick Cave song. A rare and exquisite accomplishment.

PHILIP CORNER/
ALISON KNOWLES/
GEORGE BRECHT
FLUXUS

WERGO WER83122 CD
BY LOUISE GRAY

"Heboby into who and what Fluxus is," pronounced musician and composer George Brecht, one of the founders of the loose 1960s confederation of artists that was Fluxus, to the German radio station WDR in 1983. "It's not such a stretch. After all, Fluxus did take its ethos from a post-Capoeian idea of 'harming.' If it had been the older composer's genius to suggest that silence was as much a part of music as the sound itself, it was Fluxus who picked up Cage's Zen inclination and effectively animated the picture. In short, Fluxus was a process. A collection of singular radio plays constructed by Fluxus members, the music was the artist's statement, as in the case of Cage, the three musicians who appear here, and yes, (whatever else takes Brecht might say) intimately associated with Fluxus and this CD underlines it."

quiescent dynamism of the movement

Brecht's half-hour *The House from Ming of Song* Iron is the dominant work, in length at least. Telling as its basis a multilingual reading from the Zen Buddhist text, Brecht inserts pauses — their positions determined by aleatoric operations — in the recordings. The voices ebb and flow, gently washing over one another, as the text is passed between them. Sleeplessness suggests that the piece's form could be compared to the catenae, a pleasing enough suggestion, though in reality the sound of dripping water is the work's organising principle. Above Knowles's *Bean Sequences* is similarly voice-centrism. Punctuated by the periodic shuffle of beans across a surface, a female voice delivers bean-related proverbs and stories, its malice, its wit, its knowledge of the physical properties of the legume family. Whether Knowles is making an implicit gender statement here is unclear. If she is, she soon shifts her ground, laying the voices into an unbroken stream.

Phillip Corner's *Satie's Rose Cross As A Revelation* is a delicate development of two chords from Satie. A slowly moving piece for piano and voice almost postludist in its approach, Corner's intonation is as spectral as Cogo's. "Don't be irritated," he roaries slowly on one point (all the texts are read from slips of paper pulled randomly from a hat) and there's no way that one can be. Apparently recorded late in the night, the piece achieves an intimacy between artist and listener, studio and technology on a par with the best nocturnal radio works.

ELTON DEAN & MARK HEWINS
BAR TORQUE

MOONJUNE MURDOO CD
BY JULIAN COWLEY

Saxophonist Elton Dean and guitarist Mark Hewins were playing together 20 years ago in the group Soft Heap, so they knew each other's playing intimately by the time this November 1992 set was recorded live at London's Jazz Cafe. Remixed by Hewins, their little to suggest its concert origins. Dean's unmistakable alto saxophone and sizzle are usually heard in energetic contexts that elicit from him an almost aerobic decisiveness. On this occasion Hewins sprang a surprise, wielding a synth guitar which, coupled with techniques of rubbing and tapping his instrument, enabled him to furnish a rich, at times luxuriant harmonic base.

Hewins admits that his harmonic technique

was inspired by a rogue gesture made by Ninkor convenor and Birdjak wildcard Hugh Metcalfe. An object lesson in the obliqueness of 'influence': Hewitt's lush textures couldn't appear more remote from Metcalfe's determined ruddiness.

The synth guitar, complete with birdsong samples, creates an environment laden with ambience, but the gamble paid off: Dean pursues his lyrical incursions to the verge of contemplative blowing. It's a side of his musical character that has received too little exposure and lovely moments occur regularly throughout the three pieces.

As with John Surman's work with electronics, the results are best judged in terms of new contexts offered to the saxophonist. That may sound grudging towards Hewins, but it actually acknowledges his vital role in this duo, enabling Dean to be heard stretching out, chasing the harmonies refreshingly and at length.

VLADISLAV DELAY
NAIMA

STARGOLD 29 CD
BY BEN BORTHOM

At Ars Electronica 2001 in Linz, Austria, Heiner's Vladimir Delov took up a five day residency at the 30,000 square metre Klugeberg's sound design, creating an "improvisational soundscape" which has many alluses set about researching Two concerts (as Vladimir Delov and Uzzoni) and a site-specific sound design here, Nema is the 42 minute "sculpted" of his work there. The cover art is a photograph of a white, translucent, fabric-like, jagged clothing taken from above in white. Shapes are accentuated and the fabric overlaid with digitally manipulated planes. As a metaphor for the music it works well. Delov's surfaces are usually pliable and textured (and like these images, exquisitely beautiful), but this project delves deep into structure. Both images and soundscapes have a strong architectural theme. Deconstructing narrative space, Delov exposes the structure of the music, and the original role, with the result that it is, yet is no longer, simultaneously structure and present.

The imprints of Delay's various aliases are clear, even as they combine and switch roles with each other. This produces an instability at the core of the collaboration between his different guises. On first listen this was incredibly intense because it refused to comply with listener expectations, but it has since become one of the most fascinating aspects of the

project, Vianese drew the dubbing Techno-dub, Busiello's more abstract soundscapes and Luomo's yearning vocals and melodies all unhinge each other and fragment aesthetic resolution. Shimmering synth washes are interrupted by a tediousness occasional unfilled threats to become a rhythm. Stuttering ticks and clicks echo Giraffend's spoken word reflections upon art, music and creative production, cutting up the elliptical poem/text in the sleeveless with lyrics from Luomo's *Vocabulary Tables*. Electronics and vocals loop back on themselves in a hallucinatory drift of non-linear thought, tone and narrative in an extraordinary piece of music from one of the most consistently creative artists working today.

**ARTHUR DOYLE ELECTRO-
ACCOUSTIC ENSEMBLE**
PLAYS THE AFRICAN LOVE CALL

BY DAN WARBURTON

The concept of *'American Primitive'* could have been invented with Arthur Doyle in mind, as well as his Electro-Acoustic Ensemble, featuring upstate New York improvisers John Schoen, R. Nuss, with Dave Cross and Tim Poland from the group Collee, and Ed Wilcox from Philadelphia-based Temple Of The Mundane. With typical disregard for the mundane niceties of studio recording, Doyle apparently asked for Nuss's digital recording of a June 1999 gig at the Bug Jar in Rochester, New York to be transferred to poor quality cassette for this LP's first side. Side two was recorded in spectacular 0-1 at the Astrocade in Philadelphia three months later. According to producer Byron Coley, the tape "sounded like it had been recorded on shoe leather," and was so out of phase it was dispatched to Sonic Youth's studio in New York for eight hours' "harmonic reassembly" by Jim O'Rourke. Even so, the album still has what Coley describes as a "deep mud vibe".

"One" refers to "the late, great One Bro", though on his trio album on Zwingsung, *A Prayer For Peace* (recorded just ten days after the robbery and set for release in 2000), as well as the forthcoming *Black Book*. Based on the track is called "One Bro", Doyle enthusiastically said immediately realize that the track entitled "Gay Day Lady" is in fact "Noah Black Ark", though Dave Cross claims the leader provided the titles as they appear here. As Coley writes, "it's never easy to figure out what the hell Arthur is up to." Only too true, musicians playing with him are

Chapter Twelve: in which Dr Jim buys an ad to generate interest in these antipodean avatars of the avantgarde...

Bucketrider
Le Baphomet

A sonic melting-pot where noise meets sonority, chaos meets order, and detournement meets the muse.



Candlesnuffer

Gurtar - first through the windscreen, unloosed from captivity, savaged beyond our best remembrance.

BARBARA ESS & PEGGY AHWESH

RADIO GUITAR

ECSTATIC PEACE 99999 GO

Radio Guitar is another release in Ecstatic Peace's informal series presenting the work of female artists experimenting in sound. Like Jess Holzworth and Jutta Koether of The Outer Sound Project (see *The Wire* 214), Peggy Ahwesh and Barbara Ess are better known for their work in visual media, though Ess also has strong links with New York's No Wave.

But to say "experiment" is somewhat misleading. Radio Guitar is a triumph, not a tentative venture. Constructed, as the title suggests, from "radio sound and electric guitar", the nine numbered – rather than named – tracks sound like field recordings. They crackle and hiss. They sound ancient even as they sound alive, yet there's not the sound of a bygone era – "the old wild America" – or a distant cultural enclave. It's the sound of another dimension, neither ancient nor modern, a sound with exceptional extraordinary depth.

To put it another way: if you were a fly, track eight would sound like Kafka's *Metamorphosis* as read by Edmund Keen. There is, of course, no such recording. Well, not in this life, but perhaps in a parallel universe... Radio Guitar encourages such trans of thought. Its faux documentary effect is, of course, the result of painstaking collage. Location recordings are overlaid with found sound and lost memories, filtered through six degrees of separation, screened with random ambience, cut up, looped and layered, and bounced off an abandoned satellite. What's remarkable is not so much the method as its net effect, which is electric. For all their technical wizardry, these recordings still feel authentic, as if you're overhearing events in real time. Listening to them is like eavesdropping on ghosts.

It's an astonishing experience. The tracks have a tense presence, a nervous energy that strikes off abruptly at tangents in response to some alien whim.

But, if the logic they follow is inscrutable, it is also compelling. Beneath the chameleon surface, there is another music. A gloom underlow stirs all sorts of unbidden emotion, inspiring queer visions while defying analysis. Just as a radio tuned between stations races otherworldly awareness, so Radio Guitar disrupts perceptual convention by installing something quite mysterious in its place.

Both Ahwesh and Ess teach at Bard College in the upper Hudson Valley, New York. Originally from Pittsburgh, Ahwesh is an accomplished experimental film maker, having started out with Super 8 in her teens. She now works in a number of formats, mixing obsolete technologies and digital video to create distinctive hybrid films that challenge cinematic conventions. In *The Puppet*, for instance, she adds her own voiceover to game-playing footage of Lara Croft. Barbara Ess is a lifetime New Yorker and a graduate of late 1970s No Wave exemplars, The Static. She was an early associate of Glenn Branca, playing in his Ensemble and collaborating on the mixed media zine, *Just Another Ashhole*. She also played ukulele in Y Pants, three female pranksters intent on making real mischief with hugely amplified toy instruments. For the last ten years, she has been performing with another female duo, Ultra Vulva. Ess is also a distinguished photographer and has just published an impressive monograph, *I Am Not This Body* (Aperture H&K \$40). Her photographs show the same interest in alternative realities as the musique concrète of Radio Guitar.

For the past 20 years, Ess has worked mainly with pinhole cameras, awkward, galumphing contraptions from the dawn of photographic time. She turns their crude optics to her advantage: the long, lensless exposures capture hazy scenes with luminous intensity. The short focal lengths feather and distort the images, emphasising surreal elements. She tints her prints carefully, usually in muted duotones, to enhance the clairvoyant effect. Particularly revealing, when considered alongside the numinous wonder of

her music, is the self-portrait gracing the book's cover. Ess hovers at the parhelia's periphery, caught between a sunlit meadow and the swirling cumulant gloom, like Alice peering into the White Rabbit's hole. But her face, wary and uncertain, is already dissolving, merging with shadow, plunging into the unknown. It's a curious portrait that absents its subject. But Ess absolutely insists she won't be pinned down. Light is evanescent. Personality changes. She wants to show what cannot be seen.

Ess clearly has uncommon instincts. She finds signs of immanence everywhere – at home, on the beach or the street, in the wild – and invests the simplest scenes with an air of mystery: above a mountain lake cradled in shadow, long white legs scoop at the huddled sky; a dove appears plumb in front of the camera; a sudden flurry of lilac and mauve; a snake slithers across suburban shagpile toward a blazing hearth. In these vivid instances, the symbols, be they never so hoary, sing.

It's a thrilling vision – not because it glorifies the familiar, but because it animates the unknown. Michael Cunningham, author of *The Hours*, who, with Thurston Moore and Guy Armstrong, contributes texts to her monograph, says Ess belongs to "a curious breed: the ones determined to understand more than the visible, the ones fearless enough to believe that the world is made up not only of more than we can see but of more than we might want to imagine." She is, he concludes, plotting "an astronomy of the invisible".

He might say much the same of her collaboration with Ahwesh. Radio Guitar sifts through sonic detritus for signs of life and stumbles on another dimension. It may be a house of the spirits or a tower of Babel in some far insect realm. It doesn't matter. What makes this record remarkable – moving, even – is its fresh sense of absence, its longing for meaning and the ingenuity with which that longing is expressed. Not a word of explanation. Not one single hint. The imagination is invisible. □

No Wave guitarist Barbara Ess (left) and her no-less photography (right), both taken from her book *I Am Not This Body* (Aperture Press)

Bleddyn Butcher
tunes into the lost
dimensions
explored by a No
Wave photographer
and film maker
adrift in music



faced with three options: either follow him into the tiny, cellular structures that make up his "compositions" (as Sunny Mummy did on 2000's *Dead DFA New Vibration*); or with the flow into a versatile, joyous free for all (side two's "Mummy" being a fine example); or sit back and let him wall. On "Day Doo Lady," the drummer is content to lay down a funeral New Orleans 4/4 swing and leave Doyle to do the business. Either through the source tape's variability or D'Rourke's intervention, "DDC" ends up muckabooing Doyle to produce a fearful majesty: one Doyle is well enough, more of him is deeply unsettling. And that's precisely the point: everything about his work, from the pieces themselves to the recording to the track listing and sleeve notes, is designed to deliver the listener a severe shock, questioning the very nature of what jazz is, and so should be. The answer to is simply let yourself be carried away. The package is completed with the inclusion of a bumper sticker: "Worship If You Love This Arthur Doyle Electro-Acoustic Ensemble."

HAMID DRAKE & ASSIF TSAHAR
SOUL BODIES VOL. 1
ANUS ANUS CD
BY TOM PERCHARD

This live recording was made at New York City's Vizion Festival, the series co-founded several years ago by Israeli-born reads player Assif Tshar. Still in his early thirties, Tshar has played with William Parker, Sasin Ibarra and Rashied Ali, among others, while Hamid Drake is a heavily in demand drummer in avant circles. These long pieces make up this recording. For the first few minutes, Tshar's unaccompanied torso sax solos at Evan Parker's bulging circular fingerboard, but these are quickly subsumed under a more dominant late-Coltrane influence, which, for the rest of the performance, the saxophonist attempts to assimilate. Tshar is a long way from arriving at any really personal approach, and it sounds like partner Drake's integral identity only makes him more uncomfortable. Drake's mastery is complete, and sometimes he can't help but swallow up Tshar. Bursting into the first track with a New Orleans groove as powerful as it is unexpected, the drummer commands the proceedings, throwing rhythms to the saxophonist from second to second and modeling the longform progression of each piece.

Drake may find himself identified as a 'tree'

player of some sort, but the grooves he likes to set up are as "in the pocket" as you like. Free jazz may have always looked backwards as well as forwards—many players of the 1960s saw the return to collective improvisation as an evocation of early jazz practice—but where the music once borrowed techniques, new players like Drake borrow styles. The drummer's "freedom" might be in his ability to explicitly contextualize his own music making, rather than in any new technical or stylistic approach. Tshar's freedom too: while Drake's frame drum and mizmar calls rack across to the Middle East in "Day Dances," so the Middle Eastern's bass clannet heads back to black America.

DREXCIVA
HARNESSED THE STORM
TRESOR 141 CD
TRANSLUSION
THE OPENING OF THE
CEREBRAL GATE
SURREMOT 09 CD
BY KEN HOLLINGS

So determined have Drexycia been to surround themselves with mystery that this two-man experimental noise crew from Detroit really does appear to inhabit a far denser medium than the rest of humanity. Fiercely retaining their anonymity, they rarely grant interviews; expressing their perceptions through a complex aquatic mythology, they equate underwater existence with the direct communication of purpose. At times murky, impenetrable, unsettling and hostile, a sense of conviction runs through their work that if radical thought is to serve in today's reified intellectual atmosphere, it must continually rediscover itself.

Reducing the Drexycia myth to its most twisted elemental components, *Harnessed The Storm* is a series of bathed and strenuous abstractions derived from the mysterious ebb and flow of natural forces at their most extreme. Even the warped syntax of its title suggests some fundamental upheaval, whose reverberations can be felt throughout the album's opening track, "Under Sea Disturbances," in which powerful rhythmic subudence and fluttering keyboards are held together in delicate balance. The direct, surging techno of "Digital Truism," released last year as a 12", is similarly counterpointed by the detuned son of such tactics as "R. Brown's Black Storm Stabilizing Spheres" and "The Plankton Organization," in which sounds have been squeezed and compressed into strange

uneasily shapes. Stripped of the student comic book rhetoric and action figure graphics that threatened to subsume their 1999 *Tresor* album, *Harnessed The Storm* is a far more rigorous and challenging proposition, with mixes that run long and deep, rippling with the fastest play of shadows in light or observed from the open floor. If there's a story to go to all this, Drexycia are way too subtle to give it up.

This understated confidence is echoed in *Translusion: The Opening Of The Cerebral Gate*, a side project produced by one half of Drexycia as a Dimensional Waves Transmission in which contained silvers of glistering Detroit Techno-pop offer glimpses into a world where minds are tweaked onto new levels of consciousness. The sharply metallic pulses nocking through "Negative Flash" and "Central Cortex Manifestation" hint at the dark illuminations to be found in complete mental breakdown, while the damaged Aed rhythms of "Disbus in Guyana" and "War Of The Clones" are allowed to speak for themselves. At once any and nothing, light but brittle, *Translusion* offers further proof that although the foundations of Detroit Techno may be deeply submerged, its highest structures reach towards the sky.

ARNOLD DREYBLATT
THE ADDING MACHINE
CANTALOUPE MUSIC CAS 1006 CD
BY TOM PERCHARD

Arnold Dreyblatt's *Disorchestra Of Ecstatic Strings* has existed in various forms since 1979. The line-up heard on this recording, has several players detailed in from the Bag On A Can All-Stars. The only explanatory text Dreyblatt offers for his five pieces is a quotation from an 1887 adding machine patent: "At the completion of the tenth step of the wheel," it reads, "the wheel of the next higher order will be caused to advance one step." Well, that loosely fits the procedure Dreyblatt's music follows: harmonically rooted and rhythmically repetitive blocks of music are divided into several layers, and as each block is succeeded, these layers reformulate themselves slightly, until, by accumulation, a larger change of some sort is reached.

If this process sounds like it might be interesting to listen to, it isn't. Dreyblatt does find his constructive ideas unfulfilling, and the music sounds like it's been handmailed into form rather than set in motion and left to take over. He probably wasn't aiming for such an unliking—the ensemble's remarkable collection of double

basses, guitars, harpy-gurdy and cimbalom deliberately counters any mechanistic feel—but the alternative feels like a compromise.

The album is bookended by intermissional *Dateline* and *Meantime*, complementary pieces that sweetly parade ground percussion with sagged Morse code rhythms. The rolling style *Dreyblatt* requests from his drummer makes some of it sound like singalong glam-pop, and there's a worrying instance of 70s rock badness, too. The best piece is also the least: *motorik* in the three minute *Muse Of Wang*, the sound is spare and realistic, but the two of *beat*, percussion and a specially built thumbral either quickly work up an ecstatic frenzy.

EKKEHARD EHLERS & JOSEPH SUCHY/LIAM GILLOCK
WHITE CUBE JAZZ
BOTTROP BOY ENDFORM 12
HEIMIR BJÖRGULFSSON/OLAFUR ELIASSON
THERMOCHROMIC ISLAND
BOTTROP BOY ENDFORM 12
STEPHAN MATHIEU/TOBIAS REHBERGER
LES MALLAÏSES DE LA BEAUTÉ
BOTTROP BOY ENDFORM 12
BY PHILIP SHERBURNE

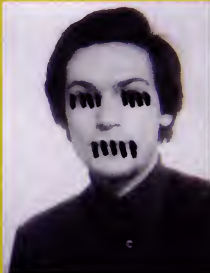
Ek/OF is a new series curated by Bottrop-Boy's Robert Meyer, designed to link contemporary visual art with new experimental music in specially commissioned sets of artworks and recordings pressed in editions of 100. The series launches with Ekkehard Ehlers and Joseph Suchy's "White Cube Jazz" and Liam Gillick's artwork "A Day With No Sun Is Night." The latter's set of marinated felt squares is like a user-friendly remix of his colorblock sculptures. Suchy and Ehlers, meanwhile, offer a warm and fuzzy set of guitar improv and guitar purplings. The biggest surprise is how topnotch the first track sounds, almost like a misleading update of Horst Vio-Lobos. In context, it's considerably more radical than the snowflake and stardust that follows, although this is lovely as well.

The tightest pairing of the three, Ek/OF02 brings together numerous short pieces by Heimir Björgulffsson with Danish artist Dariah Eliasson's "Thermochromic Island," a silkscreen made with temperature-sensitive ink. From Icelandic group Stóllapsteyja, Björgulffsson augments his characteristic hum and hiss with field recordings of water, while Eliasson's silkscreen pictures are iced up island, surrounded by black water that

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MUSIC

Albatross, Alfa.P., Body Works, Canalside, Cpinalonga, Dark-Runner, Dark Sun, Decadence, Ding An Sich, Dodo Bird, Dreams Fade In Time, Ellinkon, Glafix, Galana, Henri Kergomard, Iambia, L.O.K., NNT, Ophthalmos, See and Be Shining Wt, Slow Motion, Spatium Saevus Sonitus, Supermarket, The Illusion Fades, The Narrator, Mr Cricket, Vindian, Gm



Born again: Sacher-Pelz's Maurizio Bianchi

SACHER-PELZ MUTATION FOR A CONTINUITY

After five years of concocting some of industrial culture's most sinister electroacoustic storms from 1979-1984, Milan-based Maurizio Bianchi simply stopped. All of his communications with labels, distributors and magazines, which he had littered with obtuse prophecies and apocalyptic rhetoric, also ceased. Rumors persisted that he had succumbed to unsubstantiated complications from unknown physical deformities, or that he had joined an obscure monastic order. The latter was somewhat validated when he resurfaced in 1998 to release two wholly uninteresting Ambient records filled with gilded spiritual imagery. The self-proclaimed nihilist had, in fact, become a Jehovah's Witness.

Many of Bianchi's contemporaries who remain antagonistic towards Christian morality scoff at his conversion, casually dismissing him as a treacherous defector. Yet from Bianchi's perspective, his contributions to industrial culture were more of an outward expression of an internal turmoil, where the seething aesthetic violence of his metaphors of genocide and malevolent cancers conflated with a nascent Christian epistemology. He was probably a Christian when he was making the bulk of his music during that period, but chose to keep his beliefs shrouded in mystery.

Since Bianchi's return to the musical world, he has been resurrecting many of his earlier recordings, first with the *ArcheoMB* reissues of his suffocating, "protoneurotic" electronics recorded under his best known moniker MB, and now with this box set from his first late 70s musical incarnation as Sacher-Pelz. Under this guise he produced four cassettes as Sacher-Pelz in limited quantities for his friends and the few proponents of experimental music

in his hometown. These recordings were self-described as *musique concrète*, but are clearly situated outside of the realm of academia and the institutionally driven music of Pierre Schaeffer or Pierre Henry. Instead, Bianchi had fused the most primitive application of *musique concrète* with the aesthetic principles of Throbbing Gristle's "entertainment through pain" and William Bennett's extremist *Come/Whitehouse* projects. While the MB recordings were distinctly electronic albums that took the sounds of Conrad Schnitzler and Kluster to oppressively object ends, the Sacher-Pelz tapes paralleled the destroyed/recycled music found on Boyd Rice's *Black Album*.

With what appears to be a homebuilt set-up of multiple tape machines, a turntable and a few simple electronic devices, Bianchi abused his vinyl collection of Kraftwerk, Neu!, Marianne soundtracks and unidentified disco tunes to arrive at a mutilated version of the originals through monotonous loops and vamped warble. What little references to *Autobahn* that could be heard had been disfigured and corroded as if the sounds themselves had been exhumed from a lengthy burial in a murky swamp.

The first Sacher-Pelz tape, *Causus*, found Bianchi enthralled by the technology of a vamped tape machine. This recording takes those post-mortem tones from his beaten Kraftwerk albums and twists them into a nauseous rhythmic movement through erratically shifting, serial repetitions. *Venus and Cease To Exist* are similar in their asynchronous looping textures, but they show him experimenting with the vamped and an additional synthesizer that bleeds through the turgid noise. Even within these decidedly primitive recordings, he makes it very clear that he intends to pursue a monitory and dullness within his sound as an exorcism of his existential frustrations with life.

The final Sacher-Pelz recording, *Velours*, is the most advanced of the four, with his monotone loops moving

Maurizio Bianchi's late 70s Italian Industrial onslaughts were the prelude to an unexpected musical conversion. Jim Haynes seeks salvation in mutilation

between clarity and abstraction. Lifting samples from *Neul 2* was certainly an interesting choice, since that album already featured a number of Neu!'s vamped "remotes" of their own work. Nevertheless, these snippets have been contextualized as grizzled collages of smoldering noise and disjunct textures that swell in complexity to create a swirling crescendo of black energy.

At times, though, the Sacher-Pelz recordings are unwittingly comical. Jamming sonic manifestations of erratic vertigo and shadowy hallucinations emerge from within Bianchi's backlog of damaged cultural references. Many of his collages have been sutured together Dr. Frankenstein-style, with the clumsy aural stitching of the tape machine audibly starting and stopping. Occasionally such techniques re-emerged in the later MB recordings, only they were better hidden behind the dense walls of interlocking delay patterns and dive bombing electronic squalls. The Sacher-Pelz recordings lack the focused intensity that overwhelmed the final MB recordings such as *Carcinosi* or *Endomecro*. Similarly, the MB recordings overlapped with various Christian references — as in the dedication for *The Plain Truth* "to all the redeemed people" — which, in hindsight, indicate Bianchi's misanthropy was an inwardly directed form of asceticism. At that time, he was in effect actualizing the Greek proverb found in Luke's Gospel, "licking against the prickles", as the futile and self-destructive opposition to the will of God. Yet, Sacher-Pelz offers only a few clues that his work from 1979-84 would be a catalyst for his spiritual conversion. At this stage he was still citing the stereotypes of transgressive aesthetics found in the likes of De Sade, Manson and, of course, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch. The Sacher-Pelz recordings stand as the opening chapters in a ghostly aural diary that still have few parallels within contemporary culture. □

gets bleached by the heat of your fingertips. Metaphors of the frozen North have often been applied to the region's artistic scene wondering if these two finally just gave in and decided to address the topic outright.

DN/OFOC3 bafflingly comes as a 12" vinyl recording of four tracks by Stefan Matiski, and a signed and numbered 10" sleeve from Frankfurt's Tobias Reibnegger, whose whimsical design recalls Paul Klee. As with the others, no information is given as to how the artists and musicians came together. In Reibnegger and Matiski's case, the former's quirky illustrations don't necessarily suggest a visual interpretation of the latter's trademark sonic auras, represented here in gleaming drums, thrummed harp and backwards piano. But the perceptual gap poses interesting questions regarding the history of musical illustration, which the next set pairing Sarah Mims with Jan Jenek, Henrik Håkansson with Aljandra A. Acosta, and Angela Bimba with P.W. might well answer.

FIMBA EPHRON SOUL MACHINE TZANIK TZ15132 CD

BY JOHN CRATCHLEY

Ephron's regular gigs include Hasidic New Wave and Dave Fuzzy's Headless Tenses, firmly rooting him in the NYC downtown scene. Another in Tzani's Radical Jewish Culture series, and his first release as leader, *Soul Machine* combines traditional Jewish elements with jazz rock fusion. Masada meets Weather Report.

Comprising Ephron on bass, Edward Simon on keyboards, Jan Black on drums, Dave Benay on saxophone and clarinet, and Adam Rogers on guitar, his quartet pull off this as a fusion with an equal measure of spiritual depth and musical inventiveness, and without a hint of compromise or sentimentality. They also blend in elements of traditional Jewish chant, giving it a resonance similar to Uri Caine's takes on Mahler.

The quartet sound is well balanced (David Toren, guesting on oud and samiras, was responsible for much of the mingling) and Jan Black is outstanding. His drumming is always surprising and often improvisational, driving the set with determined accuracy and verve. The ensemble's solos are few and concise, with due care exercised towards synergy and integration (John Zorn's own project, *The Gift*, has similar musical values) and is a good point of reference).

The jazz rock fusion of "Deadly Play Of Timbers," a track full of menace and heavy inevitability, is more dourly brooding than frenetic, yet the group are capable of delicacy to redress the balance. Dominated by a somber grandeur, however, the overall tone of the album is mournful rather than celebratory.

MORTON FELDMAN STRING QUARTET (II)

HAT (NOW) ART 4144 XCD

BY PHIL ENGLAND

Recalling the time when The Kronos Quartet gave the world premiere in 1963 of String Quartet (I), the group's David Harrington remembered, "Even now when I'm thinking of the Second Quartet I have a shooting pain in my back." If the HCs Ensemble did not have the benefit of the late composer's direct guidance, the group did take advantage of the recording medium where, presumably, they were able to record in chunks

Their performance is unquestionably committed and a lapse of concentration is never apparent.

Feldman's compositional method was about covering sounds, or waiting for them to spring up from the ad hoc, fleeting relationships and weighing their rightness. This disposition was beyond, and even antagonistic towards, rational description. Like many in his generation, he was wary of the classic, emotionally manipulative narrative arc which "comes as to exalted heights perhaps, but when it is over, we are exactly where we were before our journey" (A. Compositional Problem, 1972). So while the overriding impression of his second string quartet is of unattainable beauty, it's the kind that helps confer a stillness, even a hint of essential gloom, a more subtle and lasting serenity, its truths revealed by patient observation.

The piece's length—at between four and six hours it's most likely the longest written for string quartet—is critical in achieving this effect. But the reasons he gave for why longer pieces were much more down to earth: giving himself new challenges and new problems to solve. "Up to one hour you think about form, but after an hour and a half it's scale," he said. "Form is easy—just division of the thing into parts. But scale is another matter. You have to be in control of the piece—or it requires a heightened kind of concentration. Before, my pieces were like objects; now, they're like evolving things."

Those who know Feldman from his piano works alone might be surprised by the flow of invention here: its twists and turns are endlessly fascinating and memory-conforming. In his original notes for the piece, Feldman described his composition method as "assemblage" where "there is no continuity of fitting the parts together as words in a sentence or paragraphs." The ideas come in short blocks but the blocks themselves are constantly moving internally, with Feldman frequently moving among the chromatic intervals between them. The effect is of an object slowly turning, casting the light to strike differently by degrees. Sometimes these components are bookended by pauses, giving the impression that the music's breathing as it ebbs and flows, progressing largely in a manner of unhurried dignity.

Feldman is playful with repetition and variation. He avoids schema and establishes patterns only to break them. Occasionally there are playful pizzicato passages or a couple of plucked notes that bridge a passage, a sequence of constantly changing chords, equally beautiful, melt into one another; the music will pulse with random or repeated chords regularly placed, then suddenly a short melodic line is repeated against a single held note. The mood of exalted, ecstatic contemplation only occasionally turns abrasive or dissonant and, very rarely, harsh and staccato. There are a couple of surreal moments when the quartet lightly pulse together to give the effect of a church organ or a gigantic piano accordion. Such moments serve to indicate how far Feldman had gone in realising his later goal of de-instrumentalising sound.

The most familiar element is a gently swelling and receding chord. From its fullest point a tangential, separate note emerges that outlines its source point. This two-part pulsing effect repeats itself perhaps one element of the structure changing from one pulse to the next. Meanwhile, another phrase recurs in slightly

altered forms at intervals, as if marking the passage of time, in the same way one might come across a style every now and then along a woodland path.

On the final two discs the drama, or rather the rate of invention, slows up, it's as if Feldman did not want to interfere with the ascent of a spiritual mind-set—the advance into a waking dream state. This piece becomes less about inspiration, low and devotion and more about stillness.

THE FUJI ANYWAY WHAT TIME DID YOU GET UP THIS MORNING GRAMOPHONE GROSS CD

BY MIKE BARNES

The Fuji, or Fuji Shima, is a phenomenon. A former welder, he's now a peripatetic busker, travelling the world, living largely on the proceeds of paintings of other busking musicians, whom he also records in a diary and, more recently, video footage. When interviewing trumpeter Paul Sheenham "discovered" him busking in York some years ago, he was shown, by way of introduction, a photo of his bootlicker spot the grove of Oeta blues legend Mississippi Fred McDowell. He plays with trumpeter Betty Gamps when in Seattle and, on his trips to England, he and Sheenham (also in his band, The One King Poets and Echo City) play a remarkable duo.

This live set opens with a recording of one of The Fuji's own "discoveries," an elderly busker playing the spoons outside Kenilworth Town Underground station in North London. What follows is some other paragonical blues. The Fuji is an adventurous bootlicker, guitarist, playing Country blues in a way that also evokes Japanese *kyōka* music. He sings almost exclusively in Japanese and when he descends from the whims, clear tones at the apex of his baritone register into guttural vowels, the language sounds custom built for deep blues. Sheenham provides sparse but telling accompaniment by way of fluttering trumpet lines, harmonica and homemade instruments, including pieces of tinned gas main. On "Janky Blues," he introduces an extraordinary howling sound into what starts off sounding like a take on "Roller And Tumbler," while "A Shrike Crowing On A Dead Tree" sonically approximates its title. Questions of authenticity are redundant with this music faithful to the Delta blues spirit.

TETSUO FURUDATE OTHELLO AS NOISE OPERA LESS DISCUSSED BY BOLLE, ET AL. DUCKER DMSA0077 CD

BY STEPHEN ROBINSON

Emmanuel Lussac once remarked that philosophy is a meditation on Shakespeare. A quick glance at the recorded output of noise multi-instrumentalist Tetsuo FuruDate suggests that for him music is a meditation, albeit a garbled and twisted one, on philosophy and Shakespeare. His 1998 recording *World As Will* (reference Schoenberg) and his 1994 recording of *Macbeth* (with Mowtow and Yusei's *Tsuyu* *tsuyu*) are just two indicators of these twin obsessions. Never one to fight shy of large-scale works driven by an ambition big enough to move Brian Woolf to Ourselves, FuruDate's latest recording finds him with his group Autrement Qu'Un (formerly after Lussac's second major work) advancing once again into the world of

noise and Shakespeare: Othello As Noise Opera. But as Othello himself asks, "What noise is this?" A Prog rock incursion by other means? Pictures At An Exhibition for noise aficionados? Well, perhaps not.

His hugely promising opening shot suggests that the noise work to follow will appropriate the best of Othello as if it were just another texture in the play. Starting from Act V, Scene 1, the rising melodic intensity of the savagely overdriven opening lines, "It is the cause, it is the cause," neatly scowl their way across your scalp like a scythe. But despite the volute treatments, the ensuing fidelity to the text, which in itself rapidly establishes its own insistent meter, somehow subordinates this noise to its own poetic rhythm. It's a curious version where the relative clarity of the verses establish precedence over the surrounding barrage, dictating the terms, pace and position of the music. Although its always sonically expensive, the noise somehow becomes understated. The brooding bass rumbling throughout sets an ominous tone, albeit in an orthodox fashion. And for all their abrasiveness, the screaming sibilant scolds, fairly scaring and chilling nonetheless, the latter faintly recalling Hermann Nitsch's mammoth *Age Spot*, soon come to take a supporting role punctuating the text, with some minor modifications this could even be appropriated for a "radical" theatre production. And even then you would have to ask just how radical it actually is. Not quite noise or opera, and lacking the utility of either, it somehow skids just this side of convincing.

LUTZ GLANDIEN THE 5TH ELEPHANT REWER CD

BY ALIUM CONLEY

The new album by Berlin based composer and skilled electronics craftsman Lutz Glandien originated in studio improvisation sessions with former Henry Cow, Pave Nails and Cassiber drummer Chris Cutler and The Berlin Symphony Orchestra's tuba player Michael Vetter. Disoriented with the results, Glandien shelved the tapes. Later he revisited them and found nuggets that he sent out for refinement. Over a few years he kept reworking it to the raw material, eventually reconstituting it as this powerful set of "votalelectric stories." Each of these 12 pieces was launched from a sample lifted from the aborted recordings and was evolved primarily from recorded sounds: percussive effects, tube motifs, snippets of MIDI guitar, studio ambience sampled and processed by means of Glandien's computer, and discreetly enhanced and embellished with extraneous materials, including human voices and barbling, taken from his personal sound archive. He's a dramatic writer, arresting the attention with a pounding, propulsive opener. The gro don't slacken although the mood veers greatly thereafter. It ranges from a Can-like chug to dense thickets of uncanny scene shadows. The music on *The 5th Elephant* combines the hooks and drive of rock, the textured rhythms of electronics, the atmospheric suggestiveness of successful film scores and the structural logic of formal composition. It's easy to perceive the basis for Glandien's mad and tested affinity with Cutler, a percussionist whose playing carefully sustains creative tensions between the throbbing heart and the flawed imagination.

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IRO HAARLA & PEPPA PÄIVINEN YARRA YARRA HOSKINSON HOSKINSON CD BY ANDY HAMILTON

Though Edward Vesala no longer helms the magnificent *Sound And Fury Orchestra* – he died in 1999 – his exploratory path continues to be charted by his widow and musical partner Iro Haarla. Haarla, who translated Vesala's ideas into orchestral notation, still plays piano in the Orchestra, but her belated album is a much more minimal creation, involving a duo with another Vesala collaborator, saxophonist Pertti "Peppi" Päivinen. Päivinen appeared on many Vesala albums including *Kulervo* and *Invisible Storm*, and has also been a member of Anthony Braxton's Finnish group, Ensemble Braxtona.

On Yarra Yarra, Haarla plays piano, harp and cello, a Chinese instrument from the same family as the Japanese koto that's laid flat on a table, for which she provides her own idiosyncratic tuning. The recording was made in the darkest days of the Finnish winter edition, and the mood is often melancholy even bleak. "Yarra Yarra" is an Aesopian phrase meaning "flowing, flowing", and the tempo meanders and ad lib, with fewer a groove is taken. But any sense of sameness is dispelled by charges of instrumentation – between sax and flute, and piano harp and cello – and subtle variations in its spare moods.

Half the pieces are by Edward Vesala, the rest by Haarla and Päivinen. A stark beauty often emerges, for instance in Päivinen's abstract soprano playing on "Ready To Go". Charting an amnesia through grief and a rising again from the ashes, the opening track "Tietä" ("Phoenix") features Haarla's harp and Päivinen's soprano sax. Vesala's "Invisible Storm" brings them closest to jazz, with Päivinen on tenor, looking to Coltrane or Gato Barbieri's scorching fervour. He goes so deep on baritone on "Saint Lady" that that first c sounds like a bass sax. It needs time to sink in, but this meeting of fire and ice is a slow-burning true classic.

STEFAN KEUNE & JOHN RUSSELL EXCERPTS & OFFERINGS ACASTA 14 CD BY BEN WATSON

Free improvisation is intimate music, probably the most intimate there's ever been, which may explain why attempts to make it project (through rock) or grandiose (through orchestras) are fraught with peril, often simply proving that straight rock groups or orchestras can play better solos or create more interesting textures. Guitarist John Russell is an intimate's intimate, so as an improviser he plays a strong suit. His instantly recognisable acoustic guitar plucks have none of Derek Bailey's "blew yer" attack, none of Eugene Chadbourne's flashy chops, none of Joe Maneri's charming autodidact complexity, yet they might well be the epitome of what makes free improvisation a lovely music. His string sound is warm and inviting, and his harmonic ideas are persistently interesting, like a sympathetic improviser whose questions keep arising clear and opening doors.

Soprano and alto saxophonist Stefan Keune played 14 minutes with Russell at Liverpool's Bluecoat Arts Centre on 16 November 2000. The 20th of these were recorded in London for

days later. He plays the squeaky door style of saxophonism that results from intensive questioning of the presence of pitch. Peeking at the notes and then chiming around it destabilises the harmonic structure and creates bizarre spaces for play (this is not just an Improvisation check out just saxophonist Bernie Wellesco). Russell finds a note almost akin to jazz "screaming", except here the music has slowed to an endless obligato. The pressure of the changes forever postponed. Keune and Russell have so many moves in their fingers they can peak this music with musical ideas.

Improvisation is this intimate and compressed makes the gestures so small that the wide view might be that nothing "happens". The listener certainly gets the measure of the music quickly: no huge surges or major transformations in store. But the ways in which the duo's superficial phrases slip and slide over each other are inventive, non-assertive, speculative and pretty.

KONTAKT DER JÜNGLINGS

O
SKE STINE DASH CD
BY DAVID KEISMAN

O is the second instalment in an ongoing series of collaborations between German sound artists Thomas Köner and Asmus Tietchens. Released in an edition of 100, it's a live record of an event staged inside the hull of MS Stabitz, a ship hauled out in Rostock, East Germany. Between them, Tietchens and Köner span two generations of inventive electronic noise. Tietchens has been active since the 1960s, morphing found sound into cobwebs of wrought iron noise, while Köner came to prominence in the 90s with his beautiful, bleak minimalism he recorded under his own name and the more rhythmic outings of his *Proper Rites* studio. Here the sound of harsh, degenerated electronics dominates, albeit without the sense of organic expansion that characterises Köner's solo work. O is claustrophobic, rusty, unyielding. Indeed it feels like an aural sweep through a large submerged and barnacle encrusted vessel, although at times jolting bass makes it all sound a little James Bond-like. And when it nitches down to a throbbing bass-line, it starts to feel more Love Boat than deepening industrial woe. Still, Köner's always out his music with plenty of cynical humour, and even at his bleakest he can't resist shaking his ass a little. At a guess, that leaves Tietchens to play the straight man, sometimes monolithic walls of fibrous, fluctuating tones and pushing on through to the silence down the hall. Easy, staid, possessed – exactly what you're looking for modern electronics.

LAUB FILESHARING KITTYWAY KY0205 CD BY TOM RIDGE

On their third album, Berlin duo Laub finally find they've got time on their side. Now the fashionability of all things TripHop has waned, their music has room to breathe beyond the confines of lazy categorisation. What's most striking is their sheer delight in structuring noise inside songforms. Sometimes they work a shifting backdrop of noise and texture against their jacy flow and then reveal in the unpredictability of the results. Exposing the mechanics of their songs suggests process is as

important to them as the finished piece, perhaps more so. Regardless, their songs are shorn of any conventional melodic irony. They are instead pieced together from discrete edits, echoes and glitches, overlaid with Artye Grawe-Fischer's whispered or murmured vocals, which convey a sense of intimacy amid the near chaos of processed sound.

The opening "Mola" is almost conventional, to the extent that a bass throb and vocal croon threaten to overwhelm the competing noise blobs and shifting sounds. "Temporales" is more concerning in the way it laments that track's obvious electronics/voice interface for more protein strains of loach and machine noise. "Worsup" continues in this pleasingly wayward fashion, as it struggles to impose a narrative drive on the surrounding dissonance, which it finally pulls off by harnessing its jagged energies instead of succumbing to its potential for disruption.

Occasionally the process fails them, as when glitch peppered rhythms collide with the compressed lyrical weight of "Morgen", but even this comparative failure is an interesting one. Indeed, Laub music feels like an ongoing search for poetry in unlikely places in the hard, metallic sound of electronic percussion and the ghostly grid of malfunctioning machinery.

JOËLE LÉANDRE & KAZUE SAWAI ORGANIC-MINERAL IN SPTU 0323 CD BY CLIVE BEAL

JOËLE LÉANDRE is a real a forceful record. Double bass and 17 string koto are given a good spanking, beaten with sticks, bottlenecked and so on. Sadly this is free improvisation employed to cover up an absence of real musical ideas.

But first the myth, evident in Patrick Borel's sleeve notes. A highly trained musician from a classical tradition heavily biased away from the softest improvisations and blossoms in a brave new world of free improvisation, thereby turning her nose at the academy, and liberating the instrument from the straitjacket of classical technique. To call this a myth is not to say it's untrue, just that it's a sentimental story we tell ourselves to make sense of phenomena. Acasta Léandre won first prize at the Conservatoire and joined Pierre Boulez's Ensemble Intercontemporain. Koto player Sawai founded the Kawai koto school in Tokyo with her husband, fellow virtuoso Tadao Sawai.

When these musicians chuck their toys out of the pram and improvise, there's no guarantee the results will be listenable. At least it may be playful, and there's a sense that the performances were watchable, all those stoked throats reverently into instruments, all those mighty slaps of strings against wood. But without the live, here we merely have a recording of a theatre concert. Léandre sets the pace, leading from one forcefully played motif to another. At one point she tries some vague "Eastern" singing, which is embarrassing but brief. Perhaps out of deference to a more experienced improviser, Sawai copes Léandre's phrasing and approach accurately. But disastrously, for Léandre seems to be duetting with himself. Sawai's solo track, meanwhile, is a raggle of cobwebby effects from 20th century koto compositions forcefully played. By halfway through this depressing album I

would have paid money for a moment of genuine communication. Instead, I get plenty more thudding of defenceless wooden instruments, and plenty more empty but forceful playing.

GARY LUCAS THE EDGE OF HEAVEN

BY HUA HSU
Upon graduating from Yale in 1976, and time Captain Beefheart guitarist Gary Lucas, burned around Taiwan for a couple of years, ostensibly working for his dad's import-export business but in reality dedicating himself in earnest to music and art. Here he discovered the pop strains of Chow Hsuan and Bai Kwang, two legendary performers of screen and stage from the 1940s and 50s. To be honest, Lucas' own sleeve notes to his album of covers of material made famous by Hsuan and Kwang had me cringing before a note had been played. It's not any one comment he makes, rather, it's the early Western gaze with which he regards the Chinese in his narrative. He underlines his declared passion for the music with descriptions of the Chinese singers that are as exotic and frothy as the "Others" whose unique skills are alien and opaque. The way he describes his relationship to Chinese women — a "bond affair with my Chinese girlfriend, a knockout hollor from Singapore by way of the Sorbonne named Ling-Ling" — sounds like he's relishing old dating stereotypes about Orangette and Shanghai. Li Xiaoning Chow Hsuan to an "Oriental Gullietta Masera" is perhaps the strongest moment, since the term "Oriental" fell out of use in American academic and political circles in the 1960s, when people realised it was like an Asian version of the N-word. By the time I played the CD I was half expecting a cacophony of gong hits and wandering pentatonic scales.

But the music is absolutely beautiful and unforced. The evocative opener "Old Dreams" unfolds like a fiery wisp of steam. Lucas's vibrant notes wandering and spiralling with intricate reach. His take on "The Mac World" is earthy and skittering, like John Fahey envious Shanghai. "The Wind" is beautifully rendered at a patient, almost teasing pace. Most impressively, Lucas shades in the unspoken sentiments of these pop verses, the plaintive wails or agonising howl and forth implied in the originals. His guitar coaxes different textures from these standards, making them his own. He goes whammy on "When Is My Home", unearthing an unstable, jarring electric blend of blues frolic with pop melody. On "If I'm Without You", his soft acoustic tone replaces the vocal with more expression than words could hold.

He enlists two singers on half of the songs: Gaoist Chou and Gaoist. Well suited for the music's upper vocal climb, their voices are divine, though enunciation trips up some of the croaking riffs and flows since, in Chinese, the individual accented stresses of words and phrases define meaning. However, on the captivating "Songstress On The Edge Of Heaven", the interplay of Chou's mandarin, beautifully flirty hums and Lucas's faithful prying work perfectly. But Gaoist's sharp diction often gets garbled in dressing, though her cool, flat voice finally shows impressively on the contemporary "The Moon In The Street", an album highlight.

Still, the instruments come out best, partly because Lucas produces so much competing song elements out of his lone guitar, or is

settings minimally arranged for guitar, bass and drums. Indeed, there's much to confirm the legitimacy of Lucas's Chinese project, even as it is partially undermined by the sleeve notes. Yet vocally, if anything, his *Edge Of Heaven* is a faithful reading of an imperfect, original misreading. He's attempting to preserve local authenticity in these Chinese pop forms, when in reality their popularity and style were directly related to forces of globalization and Western modernisation. There's nothing intrinsically "Chinese" about Bai Kwang's or Chow Hsuan's songs — they were pop songs adhering to pop rules. Beautiful and melodic in their original form, they're even more beautiful and arresting when this time around.

ROB MAZUREK AMORPHIC WIGNED

WALKING ROAD WITH CD
BY JULIAN CONLEY
Rob Mazurek's craft and electronics contributions have etched his signature deep into the various Chicago Underground groupings. He's also been identifiably a key player with bootleg 217. But as he told *Qwest* listeners in the *Wire 2010*, "the idea I don't even look at myself as a concert player anymore, I'm more just like a sound generator." Entering Chicago's *Scene* Electronic Music Studio early in 2000, he generated this solo venture at a tangent from his group work. On *Amorphic*, Wigned Mazurek appears above all as some designer, a creator and manipulator of patterns. On the delicate, misreading opening track, "Time Coded Single", ethereal piano dabbings are interlaced with Sam Prekop's obsessively repeated guitar figure. On "Strange Logic", a piece bristling with Hopper's topological adventures, his comet weaves around Matthew LaForte's popping bass. LaForte on "The Shipping Light", where layered brass tries out to make room for a gently unfurling, hypnotically spiny groove, answered with vocalists Fern Bowers, guitarist Cassidy and Michael Kandler on keyboards and second bassist Ben Bown.

The echoey ripple and buzz of "Decoded Roads" signals a shift towards a more codified electronic musical language, perpetuated through the truncated piano notes, processed into wips and slurs, that are bled into "Steel Cut Oak". Initially the piece feels like an overlong experiment carried out in public. With repeated listening it picks up some of the warmth of the earlier pieces. "Shower Music" delves deeper into electronic music's vocabulary of sonic abstractions. The title track, made with technical assistance from John Henndon, restores breath and blood to each craft, fragments of wisp and shadowy percussion fluttering. At a tangent but not separated from his other work, this is Mazurek pushing back his own limits with striking results.

JOE MCPHEE QUARTET UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

UNHEARD MUSIC SERIES UMSALP208 2XCD
THE NIHILIST SPASM BAND & JOE MCPHEE
NO BORDERS

NON MUSICA REC AMR00020 2XCD
BY DAVID REINAN

Canada's Nihilist Spasm Band have got to be the most happily massive improvising ensemble this side of The Mothers Of Invention. Since the

mid-60s they've been oppalling rock and jazz fans alike with the toytown tonality of their kooky-led orchestras. Their motive operandi is based around the concept of joyous noise played communally and with no regard for genre demarcation. Over the years they've expanded their palette to include electric guitar, bass and violin, but thankfully they still play them as if they were large plastic toys. Their profile has increased recently with the inauguration of the annual *Joe Music Festival* in London, Ontario, which has attracted pilgrims like Thurston Moore, Lee Ranaldo and Berthelmejus.

No Borders matches them with improvising trio, saxophonist Joe McPhee, two discs of live and studio work. Sadly, the venture falls apart on its face. McPhee sounds lost in their company, as if he's waiting for things to take off. He's essentially a dynamic player, whether carving solo parts or charging a large ensemble, whereas The Spasm Band play little regard to dynamics of any kind. They simply start playing and, after a while, they stop. A more worrying trend is how Bill Eiley — the one who launches the improvisation with a giddy monologue — is starting to sound like the kind of despot the paradox, as he spits in mock, rudist rage. McPhee is picking an impressive arsenal here — didgeridoo, tenor sax, pocket cornet and Casio size — but you can only really get intimate with his magic in the set's smaller groupings.

Try instead McPhee's first record, *Underground Railroad*, cut live in 1969 at New York's Holy Cross Monastery and reassured here for the first time. It takes its name from the system that helped escaped slaves make their way from the Southern US to Canada and freedom, and as such it's an emotionally charged set. The cavernous acoustics of the Holy Cross Monastery make for monstrous fidelity. Drummer Ernest Bostic sounds like he's changing the barcodes singlehandedly, with bells and percussive clanking the chains in his wake. McPhee makes a dramatic entrance alongside saxophonist Reggie Mirka, playing triumphal parallel fumes, which Bostic beats down with his kickdrum. But it's more than mere incoherent rage, even at this early stage. McPhee had fully integrated all sorts of extra-musical techniques — shrinks, wails, phantasm sounds — to create some lovely lyrical passages. Pared with *Underground Railroad* is an archival recording of McPhee's Contemporary Improvisational Ensemble, live at the same Monastery six months earlier. It marked his first public performance on tenor. As a first shot, his playing is satisfyingly messy.

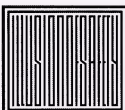
ALAN MOORE & TIM PERKINS ANGEL PASSAGE

RE: PM 40

HUMAN GREED CONSOLIDATION

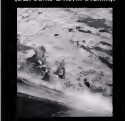
BY EDWIN POUNCEY
As these two intriguing releases confirm, former *Beneath* bass player Steven Severin's RE: label is responsible for some of the most imaginative *Cold Ambient* rock around. The label's tapping into a completely different strain of maggot music which has shrugged off its 50s Goth image to emerge kaleidoscopic, resplendent and terrible to behold.

Writer, artist and magician Alan Moore was responsible for creating *Watchmen*, the "graphic



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historical image MP3s over 50 full length tracks, many not available elsewhere, including new selections from the European tours of April and June 2001 (Dan Burke & Kevin Drumm).



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DIE STADT

Soundcheck

novel that changed the attitude and thinking of many who had never before dreamed of picking up a comic book. He also wrote from Hell, a serialised account of the Victorian Jack the Ripper murders, with comic artist Eddie Campbell supplying the visuals. Tim Moore's knowledge and relationship with the dark side is no pose: soon becomes evident when listening to him perform *Angel Passage*. Written as part of *Tigers Of Wrath*, a celebration of the life and work of William Blake held at the South Bank's Purcell Room last year, his atmospherically rich, psychodeic and geographic rant takes the listener on a whirlwind tour through the artist's tormented life and the London that was the source of his inspiration. Amply illustrated with Tim Perkins's illustrated instrumental passages, he conflates Blake's life in the sprawling, ancient city – besieged out firing tigers and expiring red dragons on street corners – with his own experiences. Centred on Moore's raw-throated incantations, we are flown over infernal factory chimneys on bats wings and bustled down smoking alleyways to be shown shimmering, leprous visions of heaven and hell.

Next, Eddie's brother, David Good, aka writer Michael Begg and illustrator Deryck Thomas, are also in tune with the dark side of music, art and nature. Their intensely constructed debut, *Consolation*, is a fear-filled symphony of terrors which, once again, leads the listener into the unknown, opening up new vistas of sound experimentation where rhythms and beats are compounded into seamless sheets of vibration and feedback. Interspersed with sampled voices and altered instrumentation, *Consolation* becomes a living entity that gradually embeds your imagination inside its numerous sonic tentacles and refuses to relinquish its grip.

THE MUSIC ENSEMBLE

THE MUSIC ENSEMBLE
HOMECOMING RECORDS CD

BY TOM PEARCE

The Music Ensemble was active around New York in the mid-1970s. Although its membership was somewhat irregular, their core was a quartet of bassist Willem Parker, Billy Bang on violin, saxophonist Daniel Carter, trumpeter Malik Baskin and drummer Roger Blass. These concert recordings were made at two New York colleges. That's appropriate: these are apprentices' performances. The sound is extremely myopic, but it's still not easy to deduce that, collectively, the Music just isn't very good. Parker and Bang are far and away the best players here, although both are often very difficult to hear. Together with Bang, they provide a certain amount of interest. But the horns dominate over the album's 10 minutes, and although Baskin and Carter try to disguise their youthful tentativeness as something more mystical and portentous, their dialogue remains airbrushed throughout.

Each performer begins uncertainly, and in these fragile openings is the best music. Bang and Baskin's petulant solos and gang strokes lend a maelstrom attractiveness to the quieter moments, and at least, Parker's already accomplished playing can be properly heard. But on the rare occasions the music gets going, Bang becomes inaudible while Carter and Baskin continually warm up their scalar nooses.

NEWBAND

HARRY PARTCH &
DEAN DRUMMOND

INNOVATION 541 CD

BY CLIVE BELL

A good deal here for fans of the maverick, self-taught composer and instrument builder Harry Partch (1901-74) – these new recordings of Steven Inoué and Derek Brooker represent more than half an hour of his music. The rest of the CD has two substantial pieces by Dean Drummond, custodian of a large collection of Partch's instruments. Threatened with homelessness for a while, the collection has been safely housed since 1999 in Mortlair State University in New Jersey.

The two Partch pieces are from the 1940s. The chiming strings of *Kithara* and adapted guitar, combined with diamond marimba and cloud chamber bowls, conjure up Indonesian music, or maybe Portuguese. Both the sounds and the meltonal scales are exotic, and Partch definitely has a place in the story of mid-century American eclecticism. He took on a massive task to singlehandedly reinvent Western music, instruments, scales and all. Yet he ended up with a strange simplicity that remained wary outside public gaze until, slowly, tedious his death, marimbists encouraged people to take another look. Set amongst slippery tonal woken and chromelined mad organ are texts by a variety of poets: a mystical vision of paradise by Ella Young and a harsh look at urban degeneracy in "The Street" by Willard Motley. Over Partch's gestic rhythmic patterns, the words are intoned like psalms in the rich baritone of Robert Osborne. Osborne's intonations are accurate, though I wonder if an untrained singer like Partch himself, might serve the songs better. It was reminded of a bygone avant-garde, when a figure like WB Yeats rushed about London attending seasons while reinventing or Irish theatre which would employ his own music for the long forgotten recorder and psaltery. And in fact Yeats was one of the writers in contact with Partch, who had very little to do with composers, indeed, part of his charm is that musically he doesn't fit in anywhere at all.

Dean Drummond serves Partch's music well. His own writing has the same strong sense of colour and meltonal concerns. However, he is not self-taught, and his composing brings back some of the dense complexity and busy quality that Partch was presumably reacting against. His *Congressional Record* is a hysterical and brooding setting of a speech by Senator Jesse Helms in favour of abolishing the National Endowment for the Arts – a heavy-handed attempt at musical satire a world away from Partch's tight touch.

PHOSPHOR

PHOSPHOR
PORTFOLIO PITCH CD

BY CLIVE BELL

A clearly focused project from Berlin, Phosphor is an eight piece improvising group, including trumpeter Axel Dörner, percussionist Burkhard Bens and Andrea Neumann (made piano, mixing desk). By no means a wacky free for all, this is a honed down, disciplined music, a carefully constructed group sound in which individual contributions rarely pole out.

The album's opening moments are its most extrovert – with blasts of steam and grating

metal, it's as if we are touring a steelworks. Later the group settles into creating sonic environments with an industrial flavour. What intrigues me is how the music aspires to the status of non-musical landscapes. It doesn't sound like a lake full of geese, but it evokes that kind of non-human organisation of sound. Recently Peter Cusack's recordings of London and the Lake Valley have had an interesting to an overhead cable facing above a disabled electric train, tadpoles trying to eat an underwater microphone, or the clanging made by Deptford market traders dismantling their stalls. Phosphor deploy their tuba, saxophone and electronics in the hope of sounding as good, as inevitable if you like, as those tadpoles.

There's also influence from contemporary composition on the organisation of the group, if not the sound. One of composed music's secrets is that musicians sit for large amounts of time playing nothing, contributing at key moments. For an eight piece improv group to adopt this tactic has a major refining effect. Still, I confess I found the album interesting rather than exciting. Much of it is restrained and low key, and, missing the theatre of seeing the notes perform live, my attention drifted. On the noises and textures, there's little feeling of anyone playing an instrument, or performing, or being concerned with beauty. Only an acoustic guitarist (Annette Krebs or Michael Renkelt) offers moments of individual musical statement. But there's no doubt that, in reaching against musical bluster and expressiveness, Phosphor have produced some remarkable ensemble sound.

ALFRED SCHNITKE

THE MOVIES
CPO 50906 CD

BY ANDY HAMILTON

Alfred Schnittke (1934-98) turned to writing film music in the early 80s from economic necessity, since the Soviet authorities frequently blocked performances of his concert music. He eventually made quite a good living, and managed to get his own family apartment where he could compose without having to endure the blame of life hockey on TV, his father-in-law's addiction. The artistic results were intriguing, for Schnittke not only incorporated parts of his film scores into his concert music, but also worked the other way round. Alexander Vashkin's excellent analyses, published by Phaedon, analysed Schnittke's complementary approach. Where other classical writers treat film music as unimportant, Vashkin explains how it acted as a laboratory for Schnittke's concert music.

The film music on this disc is arranged in "concert suites", and not all of it is consistently worthwhile. My *Past And Thoughts*, written for a TV series directed by Alexander Nuren and featuring chamber ensemble and choir, is scrappy. Schnittke's postmodern polyphony emerged in the 1970s, an eclectic plundering of baroque and classical styles, but here there's often no composer's signature at all – this is just hackwork. The two later scores are another matter. Schnittke was developing his final, almost style when he wrote the music for *Visuolud Padokov's silent film The End Of St Petersburg* (1927). The electronic music was written by his son Andrey, a collaboration repeated with Jun Nara's *The Master And Magister* (1993).

But most compelling is the music for *Agony* (1974/81), Elem Klimov's two part version of

the Rasputin story. The film was officially classified as subversive, and Schnittke's music was destroyed, only to be reconstructed with difficulty in 1987. But this is surely one of the great movie scores, characterised by familiar Schnittke trademarks such as his love of scurrying harpsichord and celeste. The bag there is so strong I've been playing it fairly obsessively – not usually advisable with Schnittke unless you're looking to commit suicide. It reappears most ambiguously in the finale of the Second Oslo Concerto from 1986, but for raw power *Agony* wins out. The score comes with a beautiful cover picture of Rasputin, with huge lace hanging down from his hair.

MASAYOSHI URABE

URUKLAK
TLOKIA 51 CD

BY ALAN CURRISON

Kyoto critic Donald Richie has written of the role of emptiness in Japanese art, from the medieval ink paintings of Sesshu to the films of Ozu. Emptiness is never a negative, an absence. Rather it has its own weight, its own specific gravity, its own presence. Emptiness is in fact constant, in that it defines, limits and supports. This painterly conception is crucial to the music of the radical Japanese artist turned solo artist, Masayoshi Urabe. First encounters with his sparse discography (his last release was a double album in an edition of 100, only available at one record shop in Kyoto) are usually bewildering. There's as much silence as there is music, largely chosen suggesting that the musician has popped out for a flake of bread. In performance, however, the methodology is made starkly visible. Urabe's music doesn't float to him or the breeze – it has to be fortuitously summoned through sweat, muscular tension, ragged breathing and measuring physical contortions. What in lesser hands would be a self-conscious display is transformed into a mysterious and groping march, raw with the potential of physical violence. Turn the volume up and these "homicidal hallucinations" (the UKing of the title) alter the emptiness out of which Urabe eeps his music, rendering the comforting void pregnant with threat.

Ultimately, it is this "rock 'n' roll struggle with his own corporeal essence that defines Urabe's work. Though he might play the alto, absolutely nothing here suggests the laidback cool of jazz or the nebulous intellectual structures of free improv. The sheer brutality of Urabe's sound is slightly more tempered than on previous releases, being briefly into the semblance of sweet melodies before nosking into the overblown upper register. Like Arnaud Giffault with madness in his later years, Urabe presents the sound of a man finding terrible beauty at the limits of his own endurance, the physical commitment underlined by clanging gauges and a coughing fit. His performance is frightening in its dedication. It's a fully realised fundamentalism that cannot but alter your conceptions of sound and nothingness.

VARIOUS

IN THE BEGINNING THERE
WAS RHYTHM

SOUL JAZZ SIRCUS CD

BY DON WATSON

The title of this immaculately conceived, if imperfectly executed compilation of British post-

Size Matters

3", 7", 10" and other misshapes



Cards on the table: Kim Cascone's Anethoch CDs

The 3" carddiscs issued by digital composer **Kim Cascone's** Anethoch label are beautiful little wall-sized objects which recall the extruded floppies of Commodore Pet-era computing. Cascone, formerly the founder of US Ambient label Sioent, has so far released four of them. His two solo efforts, *Parasites* (Anethoch A001 3" CD) and *Deaf Theories 2: Alchemical Residue* (A004 3" CD), display the parameters, and limitations, of his self-styled "residualism", a technique where software patches strip away much of the acoustically recognizable qualities of sonic information. Like the Fax label's output, *Deaf Theories* arches over wide binspaces, yawning line-bufferses streaking overhead while the irremediable foreground rattles with crinkling micro-events.

Parasites presents more abstracted digital noises, gritty buzzes feeding on a crenel glitch. Cascone's claim that his music "enables the listener to view the work from multiple perspectives" is hard to relate to the fixed results, but there's no doubting the pronounced spatial qualities of his mix. Still, it's a little hard to swallow, even in this breeze-chill rubber-glass-elm electronics, mottling flutterings and ruptured bubble movements that resemble a demonstration LP for a modular synthesizer circa 1974. Pick of the bunch is his collaboration with **Keith Rowe**, *With Hidden Noise* (A002 3" CD). The high digital frequencies are earbied by Rowe's sampled electric guitar, and the difficulty of distinguishing between improvised events in real space and their subsequent processing creates tension. The great thing about Rowe's generation of improvisers is that they don't need to describe a musical collaboration as "creating a fictional space where data could float and merge, engulfing the listener in a world where narrative doesn't exist, only atmosphere" — they just addled up and play. **Andrew Bertling**'s collaboration with Cascone, *Rust & Blue Owm* (A003 3" CD), is the fictional space in question, bearing superficial resemblance to Quasi Duro's recent work. Cascone's discourse puts the process, rather than content, at the heart of his work, but there's something interesting strewing among his metaphors of rust, dust, parasites and residue. (BR)

I can't read the notes on **Hei Yoo Doe's** 7" for the Japan Overseas label (Japan Overseas JO1642 7") or find out anything about the group, but their sound has a sentiment that doesn't really need translation. Its soft vocal pitch is the breezy style of certain late 60s Californians, with mellowed voices, acoustic guitar fingerings and the hint of jaw harp on the breeze. There is a strange studiousness to the recording here that makes it almost as chin-wiggling as that first record by Tokyo psych outfit White Heaven (the one on which they burned down the Family God and recreated it in their image). Admittedly, this is a completely different lick, and one that is objectively less interesting, but the sheer craftsmanship and earnestness with its dreamy gesticulation. (BC)

Valter Hornsness is a German guitarist whose work was previously unknown to me, but *Jungle Guitar Music* (Happy Zony ZLOV003 7") is really something not at all alien to anything else around. On "Jungle Guitar Music" the bundle of the strings is interspersed with collaged sounds that overwhelm any sense of ordinary structure or instrumentation. On "Horn Music" the approach is perhaps a bit similar to that of Eugene Chadbourne's circa his *Parasite* recordings, pecking around the guitar's neck like a cardboard turp puppet. On "Oswald" we're treated to something new in line with the early work of Stefan Basho-Jungheims. All in all, it's an unpredictably varied and very brave performance. What's this guy's line, anyway? (BC)

JaHousse's Christmas Day (Mesow Mazak 021 7") is a hideous though dull run-through of The Beach Boys' soppy Christmas catalogue, done by some travellers associated with the most recent European incarnations of Red Goyals. And, indeed, it bugs the whole shebang with an artificial sort of "pull" that would do Mayo Thompson himself proud. Ouch! My eye! (BC)

The first 45, *Sediment Thesis* (Kaeokorik K/K 006 7"), by those perennials of the contemporary Finnish underground, **MENK**, is an excellent piece of sound manipulation that spatters along like the head of Luca Brasi rolling around in a big census drum. The basic sounds were produced by "analogic gadgets" which were then fed through some old reel to reels, where they were allowed to decompose, shift and rotate. The results are quite beautiful, especially heard in

the dark. The first piece consists of undifferentiated, although natural sounding, events. They seem to be happening just over the horizon, but there is some sort of interference inside the listener's brain that keeps them from cohering. The second piece is a bit more dlattry, with something that sounds like a metal pig mask trapped inside the spinning wheel cover of a Cadillac sedan pointed straight towards magnetic north. It's a nice, dark, thoroughly winning combination. (BC)

Sanderfeld/Hansel Sack Ziegler's 200 *Acknowledgment* (September Horn [Erphasia ES04 7"]) is the third in the Erphasia series, a run of split 7"s, which combine different artists performing complex music using just one instrument. Sanderfeld's layered use of chopped and smoothed accordion flits gives their side a flavor akin to some of Kidger Carls work with the Cowes Quartet — that same kind of elegantly built avant garde suspension hat thing, y'know? Colleague Hansel Sack Ziegler's French horn is a rechanneled way that makes many of its moves absolutely untaggible. When the horn begins a more characteristic surge midway through the piece, it does so almost as a fox might emerge from the top stomach of an elephant trapped in a tump. Which is a nice thing to witness, even secondhand. (BC)

Mensurance 1 & 2 (Dachstuhl OCHO1 7") is another fine single from the Dutch duo **Vance Orchestra**, whose last 7" (on Doree) was an ear-burrowing pile of semi-chaotic sound. Using drones as a subtle component of the whole, rather than giving them the sharp focus so many artists have been bent lately is one of the Vance Orchestra's signature operations, and they continue that here. Drones can pile up in certain corners of their studio, but other crackling piles seem obscure our view of them. Using some source sounds that have a very pleasant retro-futurist bent, these guys manage to make the sophistication of their assemblages feel swingy without being stogy. In that sense, they are like a fine solo. And who among us could ask more of a mere record? In any case, really? (BC)

Going back to his early *Advanced Environmental Control* recording for mente disease, **Al Behrens** has been interested in shaping content to form post-rational narratives within his transient compositions. Similar in structure to The Hafler Trio's *Bang! An Open*

Letter but without the conspiracy subtext, *Behrens* (Edition, XVII 233" CD) is a composed collage of digitally manipulated field recordings, electroacoustic malfunctions and textual cracklings that implies a physical movement through a series of semantically charged spaces. Highlighted most clearly with "Political/Statement 1 & 2", Behrens punctuates the divisions between his collage elements of clinical environmental recordings and air duct rumblings quite literally with a recurring motif of a heavy pneumatic gate loading, as if the listener were crossing the thresholds into unknown technocratic architectures. While staying silent about what this "Political/Statement" specifically refers to, Behrens is pretty convincing in his contextual sleights of hand, revealing the psychological resonance of a particular sound, while always giving an overtly specific content. (JH)

Obviously designed to slip next to your stereo copy of the double 7" single, *Tree Jazz Und Kinder* by **Han Benwick**, Peter Böttemann and Fred Van Noy, on the shell marked "Tree Impass Singles", here is one pressed in an edition of 300 by **Han Benwick and Eugene Chadbourne** from Ecstatic Ltd (Just Another Ass Run JAART 7"). Although no one can find prints who will glue together a proper single sleeve anymore, the black and white cover "Tree" by Chadbourne's daughter Jerry is a fine example of search-away psych roccoco. On one side, Chadbourne plays Eric Ouyf's "Miss Ann" and Lameze Tristano's "Wow!" on an unaccompanied piano, on the other, he is joined by Benrick for an improvisation which segues into a forensic version of "Miss Ann", a recording from 1961. Chadbourne first heard Benrick drum on Last Date, one of Ouyf's last recordings, and he includes a note pointing out how special it was for him to play the tune with the Dutch drummer. Meanwhile, Ecstatic Ltd (run partly by Sue Mathers professor emerita Byron Coley and Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore) mention that the profanity of Chadbourne's releases should not cause us to "underestimate the sheer improvisational genius of Eugene's guitarwork". They're right, the velocity and invention of the guitar picking are awesome, although prospective purchasers may be better advised to track down these musicians live. (BW) [Reviewed by Byron Coley, Ann Hayes, Ben Watson and Rob Young]

Soundcheck

punk is evocative of the crowing moment of one of music's most alchemical metamorphoses. With the addition of The Pop Group's Bruce Smith on drums, the Sits's soundiness become beautiful; this spoiled-but-princeless punk had completed their transition into the queens of dance. The club sensibilities injected by their work with Dennis Bovell sent sparks flying as they pierced Smith's glowing percussive barrage. An up had evolved from a rattle who got majors for enthusiasm but little else into a stunningly organic vocal style.

"Silence Is A Rhythm Too", their side of a shared single for The Pop Group, is the closest their recorded work comes to The Sits' live magic. In retrospect their rebirth does seem like a pivot, if not necessarily causal, point in the evolution of music, with the 4/4 beat of rock giving way to a more fluid rhythmic pattern adapted from reggae and funk. This very moment also has spawned its way back through the tapestry of time, with The Roots' Jazzyfornia music centering their territory on their recent release *Soul Jazz* deserve credit for collecting together some of our marvelous moments alongside the Sits and repackaging them for a new audience. But, inevitably for a collection that aims to expose a subject as huge as the early 80s flowering of blessed out dance from the coldest heap of soul, spanning the electronics of The Human League and Throbbing Gristle to The Pop Group's raucous rock/jazz/soul axis, in The Beginning reads as many questions as it answers. Indeed, so broad is its range, it can only hope to present a few tantalizing stiffs from a much bigger feature. Given the cooperation of the relevant rights holders, you could make a box set on this theme without exhausting the territory.

The musical considerations are not just musical either. The Pop Group seem incredible from Bristol, whose thriving jazz funk and soul scene fed their inflammatory imaginations (along with enough LSD to burn out Coleridge, if the popular wisdom of the time was to be believed). The Sits, living in West London's frontier Ladbroke Grove, absorbed dance music by osmosis. A Certain Ratio's cover of Barbara's "Shack Up" is testimony to influence of Manchester's Northern Soul scene, while The Human League sprung from a Sheffield where the Beatnival house dances is a nightlife staple.

Perhaps focusing more tightly on The Pop Group and its offshoots — Rip Rig + Panic, Pabagab and Maximum Joy along with The Sits, in whose transformation they were very much a catalyst — might have made a more intimate picture. 23 Sides was awarded two tracks, presumably to document the cross-cultural fertilization represented by their (at the time rather surprising) merger with British jazz funk outfit Linn. But doesn't the pairing of Menah Church with the core of The Pop Group form Rip Rig + Panic represent a more exciting cross-cultural pairing?

A Certain Ratio also get two bits, neither of them their finest, the selections actually chart their transformations from the rather more interesting group who fused industrial alienation with dance music, to the Donald Johnston incarnation which so successfully mastered the jazz funk template that they rendered themselves invisible. Surely the group would have been better represented by their peak moment — the *Flamingo* — than a pair of tracks monitoring their smooth glide into anonymity?

Contributions from The Sits, The Pop Group,

Cabaret Voltaire, This Heat and TG are certainly worth the asking price. And though the rest isn't bad, the ACR example only serves to remind that — to remix The Sits — rhythm is a seismic tool.

VARIOUS SPIRITUAL BEAUTY

META MT013 CD

BY CLIVE BELL

Meta Records, one of the labels in orbit around Bill Lawell, is run by Janet Renstra. Renstra is associated with New York's Jvarkim Yoga Centre, where the likes of Madonna and Beastie Boy Mike D go for some peace and quiet, and Meta's catalogue includes dance-inflected meditation music, and the Dalai Lama hooking up with trumpeter Toshiko Kondo.

Continuing Lawell's mission to fuse musical exploration with spiritual awakening, *Spiritual Beauty* is effectively a compilation of artists who share his aims. A theme pointed out by Helen Iley is a dilemma of scale, voluntary or otherwise, from North Africa to the Middle East. So the deliciously trawled done of the opening track of the work of Cheb I Sabbah, an Algiers-born DJ now resident in San Francisco, who worked with the Living Theatre group in the 1960s, younger, and London-based, is DJ U-Cel from Morocco. London's other contribution is the heavier, more danceable trance of Jeh Wobble and Temple Of Sound. The vocalist here is Kuwaiti Shahin Dada, previously heard on the Prodigy's *For The Love*. Wobble's track is the most full-on of the rare — elsewhere dance textures over medium tempo allow us time to spit our heads.

Zahir Hussain's tablas underpin Ian Susan Deyth's flat-blooded singing on "Anisophora". This is Lawell weaving material from Sacred Systems' "Black Lull", then, Deyth goes to spread out more, and most of Hamid Dool's drum set is removed to make a mellower texture. "Whirling" brings in the raw fute of Omar Faruk Tekbilek in place of a singer, and creates a delicious take on Turkish dance music. Tekbilek works with soundtrack composer Brian Keane, a collaboration that has already produced four albums. Lawell's two other tracks break away from the formula. "Theme And Variations" showcases the intense oud of Simon Shahnoun over a strong orchestra, in homage to the great modernist of Arab music, Mohamed Abd el-Wahabi. Finally, "Ancient Evnings" is a delicate mosaic of evocative, tongue-in-cheek Lawell — it's busy rhythmic recalling WMO's master exorcist Harry Hesse.

VARIOUS TOUCH RINGTONES

TOUCH TONIC42 CD

BY JEROME MANUSSEL

The chirpy, omnipresent jingles of mobile phones are aggravating at the best of times. As this compilation from the ever-present Touch label informs us, however, a new range of phones with built-in hard disks are on the way, which will make it possible to record any kind of ringtone you want (samples, voices, sound effects), rather than the usual keyboard-generated ditty from hell. Anticipating the possibilities of this slightly alarming technological development, Touch invites various composers, artists and actors to make their own ringtones. The results are recorded here — all 99 of them.

The rollcall of names ranges impressively far

and wide. Their contorted, super-condensed efforts make for pretty strange listening, especially if you attempt to brave them on an one-singer. There's Chris Watson's wailing howls of African fish eagles, spotted hyenas, wolves and other menacing. Mike Verno's pulsing, minimal showpiece, Bruce Gillett's effected on-rail siren, a clutch of tones and other audio snapshots from Fennex that are reminiscent of Nuno Caetano's "Plus Qu'au", a few "Blue Morday"-like grooves from Senority, several excerpts between Gilbert & George, delivered in a deadpan, plummy voice, along the lines of "Should we have lunch, and then go shopping, or should we go shopping first?" The extreme electronic noise drone from Lar 7; DJ Gascamoni's "A Conscience History Of Californian Rock Music", which sounds like vinyl spun at 1000 rpm; a wailing baby, piercing whines; crackling records; anti-shredding turbine hum (which might tempt some people to start using bigger speakers to their phones for the ultimate public provocation), break bands, church organs, and an ultra-condensed sea solo from Evan Parker.

The list goes on. Inevitably, judged as a conventional CD, *Ringtones* makes for a schizophrenic, intriguing, unclassifiable stop-start experience. Perhaps this is what music will sound like once the world has been reduced to soundbites, and our attention spans demand five second hits instead of three minute pop songs. As a bank of specially commissioned samples, however, it's quite handy, even if you hate mobiles. Touch supremo Jon Wozencroft's sleeveless invite the listener to "sample, reformat and employ these humble suggestions", concluding that "the likelihood of hearing one of these on the 07/34 from the suburbs is, at present, remote".

JAH WOBBLE & SHOUT AT THE DEVIL

30 HERTZ 30H212 CD

BY JOHN CRATCHLEY

In a year that has seen him touring his Solares project, and releasing CDs like *Message To Hades* by Evan Parker and *Radiolocom* with Bill Lawell, Jah Wobble has been putting himself about recently a purple patch or spreading himself too thin perhaps? Definitely the former. Wobble's particular strength, as these projects demonstrate, is a keen ear for picking the right collaborators with whom to juxtapose his signature bottom and dubwise.

In this encounter he has joined forces with Temple Of Sound, a UK New Spires and Dubmaster Court Dubstar, formerly of *Transglobal Underground*. Whereas Temple Of Sound's Black Dried fused Afro-Caribbean and Latin sensibilities, *Shout At The Devil* rekindles the spontaneity, "catch it as it passes" credo of *Transglobal Underground's* *Deam Of 100* Nations. Mixed with Wobble's seismic beats and the vocalises of Natacha Atlas, Nina Miranda and Shahin Dada, it produces a unique blend of the Nile Delta via Steppen: Nubian trance dub.

Neil Spake's percussion (congas, bongos, Egyptian tabla and shakers) provides a constant, constantly shifting, pulsative pattern to decorate Wobble's solid and immediate bass carpet. Dubstar's guitar work and programming has a lightness of touch, weaving delicate, uncluttered and plaintive melodic lines into the

masses, yet with enough sonic clarity to give it a hint of electric and the kudos of catwalk. The beautiful, fusing vocals render the finished piece with a high glow. Sequenced with care and attention, tracks meld effortlessly to produce an uninterrupted conspiracy; yet it leaves the overwhelming feeling of moving through a bazaar of musical delights whose range of influence is completely and exotically at the label's command. Hence "Claptrap King Size" has a whiff of township guitar and infectious tiny dance, "Shoot At The Devil" has quavering overtones, while "Mahogany Rockers" mixes a reggae chop with the kind of synthesized string treatment that Nini Sawney might have produced. "La Glaciale" is an amazing amalgam of spaced out guitar and Haxtic tinged vocal over a rock beatbox.

Wobble is big enough to never place himself prominently into the mix, and conceptual motifs are shared equally throughout. This is music that celebrates its disparate sources and rejoices in their points of contact with a serenely confident result.

WORKSHOP ES LIEBT DICH UND DEINE KÖRPERLICHKEIT EIN AUSGEFLUPPT

SONG SONG 19 CD

BY DAVID KEZIAN

If the idea of 'intelligent' rock music fits you with honor, summing voices of disinterested deities like the current Red Kwole line-up, Radiohead, Steely Dan or Gair Del Sol at their most arch, then Workshop are a timely find in the eye. Coming from Cologne and based around vocalists — the saxophone-playing Kai Altfeld, Workshop accurately read two chord garage punk as teenage minimalism and sketch it to breaking point, while augmenting it with rhythmically integrated found sound, ornate guitars, droning electronics and clanking, metronomic drum machines. Altfeld's vocals are the real guy, a sweet/sneer near-falsetto that is as disarming as it is disturbing.

Es Liebt Dich... is the collector's fifth album to date. That their first two albums were re-released by Japanese Kemosabe label Captain T should give you a fairly good idea of their early form. Lengthy cut-up jams that combined the carnal rancor of the original Animal Düll with the higher minded studio rages of Faust gave the Faust tapes. *Es Liebt Dich...* self-titled vocals make mysterious, but new dominated by post-rock and regimetal rhythms, their sound has become more concise and intricately detailed. The opening "Für West?" names the stored mountain wealth of comic courtes Whittaker & Westmupple with gloopy electronic beats and a simple melody over concave circles of hypnotic sound generated with electro-percussion. And just in case anyone was fearing this is getting a little too complex, at a certain point on "Die Verwundung", a keyboard sounds a single chord of the way through the chords to restore the music's droning, one chord pattern. However, they're most affecting on "Masse Lou", a deep devotional prayer soaked on tropical pulses of drummer and in whistle. At least until it's totally undermined by its monstrous, wheezing rhythm track. Such sonic sleights of hand charge the CD with a vigour and excitement. Master too defied not too overt, it's just enough to leave you puzzled. □

The Compiler

Various artists: reviewed, rated, reviled



Left to right: Slicker actor John Hughes, Lennie Liston Smith

For **DNMIX** (JWH Editions/Aquar DMM/INTRO222 CD), the Québec-based Avant Foundation invited eight composers to plunder the back catalogue of its DMM Editions reprint and produce new work through their memes and transformations. German recycler Ralf Wehowsky, of P16 D4, kudos things off with a steadily building shimmer that peaks in a flurry of samples followed by a gentle, pulsing decline. Montreal tumbaitist Martin Tétreault's brief contribution collapses multiple sources into a jittery flux, music and voice sped up and whirled into an agitated state. French composer Christian Calon produces a tense dystopian piece in which an impoverished and seemingly distressed human voice is hemmed in by shadowy electroacoustic forms. Tom Thieriot contributes "Jauran/inal Edti", a clicking gridlock of synthetic horn sounds, an angry and terminally immobile jawn. There are two pieces from arch plunderer John Oswald. "Omignon" (re)constructs a radio phone conversation, empty words drifting amongst Johnman sounds in a communication vacuum. "Ridge" builds from ripples to waves to a breaker of lush piano music. Spleen piano runs through an animated piece by Denise Labrosse, who has played with the Groupes Wouter Brass and Aubin. Tinkling bells, organ chords and reedy blasts, carson squeaks and distorted human voices are among the other elements in this soundtrack to the enigmatic romance. Ambient technician David Krutson spins out an empha of another kind. His "Ditrme" gradually intensifies from pinpoint to full plane without revealing the source of its luminous throbs. Finally Alexandre St-Onge, an impressive associate of Krutson, draws the refraining arc from the DMMIX atmosphere, mimicking the moon rhythms of a puncture or a gas cylinder with an open valve. A long, measured breath out, the DMMIX policy of taking risks over results is albums that include amazing episodes yet are uneven overall. A more selective project, DMMIX is consistently worthwhile. (C)

Flying Dutchman Anthology (Soul Brother SBP77 CD) chronicles the more dub-theoretic, in-demand end of the Flying Dutchman label set up by Bob Thiele after he left Impulse! in 1969. While it would have been nice to hear Lennie Liston Smith's "Expansions" in context rather than merely as dancefloor fodder for the Russ Dewbury set, Soul Brother cater to the collector set, and that mentality rears its ugly head here with the inclusion of such disc tracks as Smith's only "Beautiful Woman" and Esther Marrow's overwrought "Miami". Elsewhere, though, James Spaulding rescues Leon Thomas's crystal striding with some Henry Thomas-style style, Gil

Scott Brown attempts to join the children: waltz-pierced Pharoah Alexander gets busy over an off toasty rhythm from Richard Davis and Bernard Purdie. Gato Barbieri takes the tone to Puerto Rico, and Pretty Purple flashadows Jon Bateman's "Whorehouse Funk". (PS)

The Nintendo Gameboy has become almost as ubiquitous as the mobile phone, so its amazing it's taken someone this long to come up with a software program for it. Designed by Hamburg art student Oliver Witchoy, Nintoleop is a synthesizer and sequencer program designed specifically for its integrated sound chip. **Nintoleop 1.0** (Disco Brul 4 CD) finds artists such as Metow, Hrvatski, Blectum Rom Blectum, Pitz, Vachslaw Daley, Stock, Haugen & Wikman and DAT Politics wrestling with the extreme limitations imposed by Nintoleop, compared to their Powerbooks. Inevitably some give up and some cheated, but what's most notable here is how little the lack of memory and processing speed effected each artist's signature sound. Sure, the Blectums aren't as endearingly delfy as usual; Metow is nowhere near as powerful and is forced to actually include some tones, and Hrvatski sounds like he took his Gameboy down to Juan Atkins's crib, but otherwise this is exactly how all your favourite artists would have scored the next Pokémon sequel. (PS)

The magnificent double CD compilation from Chicago label Helix, **Widespread Anxiety** (Helix 36 CD), presents the first six 12" in their "Immediate Action" rush-release series. Each EP was a mini-compilation with upwards of three artists presenting one or two tracks, and while the series bits and graphics may owe a nod to the music, the music is refined and polished. Like the Berlin label Warp Music, Helix is creating a strong label identity that is not based on a single type of music but by a common attitude through different forms and styles. It is therefore no surprise that the CDs sound less like a compilation than a particularly accomplished and diverse solo project. Many of the tracks are homages to genres. South + Savana's remix of John Hughes's "Street Story" sounds like a cool cutout from an early 70s Blaupunkt soundtrack, while Saggiatians Burns' "Role Reversal Intruder" could be from a melancholic happy movie of the same period. Slicker Meets The Aluminum Group present the wonderful "West Edge", a beautifully sparse ballad so full of anger it verges on violence, the stuttering loops and processed vocals that fade away halfway through perfectly captures the moment of calm before a torrent of fury. Retrolit and T Resurrection's minimal dubbed out Tech-House clear the path for Process's "Diffusion", a ten minute Ambient soundscape similar to Morricone's *Big Desert*. Unfortunately there is only one Telefon *Re Amore* track, a remix of John



Hughes's "Cut Me Last/Driving in LA", but he is high on collaboration of acoustic and electronics creates an exquisite set of possibilities that are cut short at just three minutes. (BB)

Long before Chicago became the hub of hipster post-rockers and newscasters, it contained the 8th largest German population of any city in the world. And that meant two things: brewurst and polka. Somehow these traditions survived wartime Nazi persecution, and polka could have had its own specialist chart in Billboard with musicians like Frankie Yankovic and Whoopee John Willfahrt (they just don't name 'em like that anymore) regularly selling half a million copies of their records until Elvis came along. **American Polka: Old Times & New Sounds** (Thorn US288 CD) charts the progress of polka from the Bohemian, Polish and

Slovenian immigrant communities of Chicago, Cleveland and Texas at the turn of the century through the New York art houses of the 60s to the Polka Midwest of today, where ironic young things turn their accordion spins to 11. Inevitably, the old stuff is the best (Guy Kluwecek, Les Lobos and the sehr authentic Frank Berardi and Karl & The Country Outback excepted) — the humour so much less self-conscious and the tempo and instrumentation so much more charming — but this is nevertheless a very fun document of one of the least heard and most misunderstood strands of popular music. (PS)

Night Owls 01 (Deluxe DMM11 CD) is a collection of Max patch notches from the fringes of the DMM electronics underground. The tracks here could very easily slipwalk into sub-Corrupted Bleeding Ghetto Ambient, but the dark textures and creepy-crawly backgrounds are more jadedged tale and fog than vintage Poca nightmares. Most of the artists here adhere to a kind of hallucinogenic, queasy wind-chime sing-songiness (the most effective being the combinations by Esa Ruoho and Ullpe), and in this clarity the wilderness panoplas of Chessa's "The Freely" and the dazed and confused Techno of Drenth Schoeneman's "Intervens" stand out. Even with mood music as well done as this, though, you still wish someone would have tossed and turned a bit more or tried to ride out the bed spins instead of trying to lullaby themselves to sleep. (PS)

You can make all the grassroots avant garde and sonic theory arguments you want about dub, but fundamentally it ain't much different from elevator music. **03: Paper** (play DMM03 CD), the third in the Tokyo label's Series, Sessions, Paper series, does what all good dub, dancier music and Muzak does: tells you into a blunted, serene state where the peking and prindling of the real world foot or sink away. The tracks here from Fire Brazille, The Mighty Quark, Howe B.

Quarer Uncle, Tinkles and Sautama Yokota are mostly exemplary Polka dub, but it's, surprise, Kan Takagi, of the sometimes excellent but mostly tedious Major Force, who stands out with "Zig Zag (Phototype Dub)" by eschewing moodiness, drop-out and echoes in favour of piercing rickie keyboard stats on top of a King of the Jungle beat.

The nadir of the mood music concept, however, is the catwalk soundtrack, and Pioneer uram merchant Frédéric Sanchez, one half of runway specialists Les Freds (you can't make this stuff up), is, of course, the very own Yanni, Vangelis and Frank Chalkfield all wrapped into one sweet. Prose-dad padlock complete with a Pioneer reusable CD deck (of course the guy wouldn't deign to touch vinyl — it's so gauche, darling).

Frédéric Sanchez (Sery France SANG64331 CD) features the Highlights of Le Fred's spring summer collection, including Prosehead's "Lovers", Ordis On Speeds "The Choruscape", to Rococo Rot, Chely Gonzalez and Sonowick's cover of "The Gramps" "Human Fly". In isolation some of this stuff is, like, right, but together you can't help getting the feeling of lemmings jumping over the cliff, especially with the preponderance of glossy, icy electon death marches. Of course, this begs the question: is beauty simply in the ear of the beholder or did our stylist damn some latent tendency that existed there to begin with? (PS)

The nearly two dozen performers whose songs are collected on **There Is No Eye Music For Photographs** (Smythsonian Pathways SPW 40003 CD) have been the subjects of photos taken by the album's producer, John Cohen. The selections range from gospel, blues and folk recordings by the likes of Rev Gary Davis, Muddy Waters and Doc Watson to more recent folk nontheists such as Bob Dylan and Cohen's own group, The New Lost City Ramblers. Intended as an audio counterpart to the recent collection of Cohen's photography (published under the same title), the disc begins with a galvanizing performance by the members of a gospel church in Harlem ("Hark You, Lord"). What follows may be read as the attempt of a Harry Smith acolyte to create his own version of Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music*, with side tips to Peru, where Cohen produced collections of indigenous mountain music. For the most part, his selections are engaging. The sole ciner comes courtesy of jazz pianist David Aronson, who trades Anita Ellia's theme from Robert Frank's best movie short, *Aut My Day*, as though he were a scot-gingered tour bus conductor pointing out Jack Kerouac's house. This is more than compensated for by Elizabeth Cotten's African stylings on acoustic guitar; her "On Babel, It Ain't No Lie" shortens the distance from pain woe to ragtime. (RH) [Reviewed by Ben Bortwick, Julian Cowley, Richard Henderson and Peter Shapiro]

The Boomerang

Recent reissues: rated on the rebound

Orchestral manoeuvres. Alice Containe

In his skenotes to the release of **Alice Containe's** *Transcendence* (Warner Bros Masters 936248183 CD) from 1976, BBC London Live DJ Kevin La Gendre links her "sensitivity to orchestration" to aranges/produces Charles Stepney, Claus Gqeman and Gae Fischer. While there may be similarities in lushness of sound and links between Containe's spiritual quest with Stepney's "positive" soul productions for Rotary Connection and Earth, Wind & Fire, what sets Alice Containe apart from her fellow travellers (some from the utter unconscious of her instrumentals) was that her effort to approach the divine never sounded class or put — her music was a true journey, and a difficult one at that, even if she did attempt to refashion her husband's most challenging work into music fit for meditation. *Transcendence* is divided into two parts: the first featuring her trademark string sound (augmented on "Yrindana Sancham" with her own tambours, tambourine and wind chimes) and the second communal Ware Kresha chams propelled by her organ and Fender Rhodes, and the finger-pop percussion of fellow devotees. Radio — Kresha Nama Sankariza (Warner Bros Masters 936248182 CD), from 1977, follows a similarly blissed-out meditative blueprint, with "Goenda Je Ja", "Prema Mudita" and "Hare Kresha" sounding awkwardly close to some UP With People material, but the more abstract "Ganesha" and "Om Namah Shivaya" follow a far less easily path to transcendence. The gem in this mid-70s tripoly, though, is *Transfiguration* (Warner Bros Masters 936248184 CD), a live recording with bassist Roger Workman and drummer Roy Hayes On the thrilling title track, she turns her suave chamber organ into an instrument as strong as John's tenor. "Misty" and 36 minutes of "Lao" follow suit with burning, reform improvisations. But *Transfiguration's* masterpiece is "Preme", on which, accompanied by a string section, Containe uses the gospel tradition with her own Eastern-inspired vision to create one of the most spectacularly beautiful ballads ever recorded (PS).

Free drummer **Sunny Murray** out of his best sales for the French BYG label's Actual series, top of the heap being *Sunshine* (Get Back/BYG Actuals GET334 LP), a glorious, high energy session with a group that included Arthur Jones, Archie Shepp and The Art Ensemble's Roscoe Mitchell on saxophones alongside pianist Dave Barrel, trumpeter Lester Bowie and bassists Alan Silva and Malachi Fowles. However, it's the young Jamaican tenor player Kenneth Tenor who really goes, playing "Tremors" throughout the set but especially on "Reel", a three-way exchange with Fowles and Murray. How Murray is relentless —

his non-stop scything cyrillic work cuts a high and drone aight through the heart of the track — *Tremors* is fleet and muscular, parodying Murray's bombast with great, cutting legacies. (OK)

More alien torques from saxophonist **Dewey Redman**, one of Ornette Coleman's most imaginative spinning partners. On *Rank* (Get Back/BYG Actuals GET334 LP) he's on ecstatic form, singing and chanting into his horn and sounding like Hassan Sabbah, the old man of the mountains. The air of Eastern trance is deepened further by his use of a buzzing musette on the title track, where bassist Malachi Fowles and drummer Ed Blackwell support him with a tight, hypnotic groove. Trumpeter **Jacques Coullin** has been very much relegated to the margins of the free world by dint of a string of historical accidents, not least of which was the non-appearance of his ESP-Disk album, cut back in 1967. Of the music he made for the Actual series, Black Suite was the stronger set but 69's *Way Ahead* (Get Back/BYG Actuals GET319 LP) is just plenty thrilling. Also saxophonist Arthur Jones plays some great, understated whooping, which Coullin cuts up with some hilariously scorching logic. Their epic take on trumpeter/composer Bill Oban's "Paper" spreads itself over the whole of side two, giving bassist Bob Gufkin and drummer Claude Colvin plenty of space. The former's arco work is particularly atmospheric. (OK)

The epochal 'experimental' still clings to **Henry Cow**. Listen to their 1978 album *Western Culture* (RCA HCA CD) and you'll discover Zappa, The Magic Band, Stravinsky, Wild and free jazz bubbling away in the alembic, but the glowing residue is distinctly Henry Cow, assured in its goals and practices. *Freedom* is accommodated, palpably so on "Garrison's Day", where guest pianist Irene Schwartz unleashes a tense, rugged solo, but it's dispirited musical intelligence and a sense of purpose rather than unfettered experimentation that keep this recording fresh. At that time Henry Cow was a quartet, with Iain Hodgkinson on reeds and keyboards, Fred Frith on guitars, Lindsay Cooper on bassoon, oboe and saxophones, and Chris Cutler on drums, but trombonist/violinist Anne-Marie Rinkels made an important contribution to the group sound, and George Borst played bass on the final track. *Western Culture* has been remastered with three extra tracks including the rousing "Viva Psi Ubs", featuring a spirited vocal chorus led by Cagney Kersaw. (OK)

Janez Jenakovic's *La Légende d'Ezer* (Montezyme NO782144 CD) was a 46 minute electroacoustic composition, originally realised between 1977-78 on an eight-track tape recorder. In order to celebrate the inauguration of the Pompidou Centre, Jenakovic was commissioned to create a light show in the Beaubourg space and to fill the space with sound. As sonic laboratory he used the studio of

Cologne WDR Radio. In interviews, Jenakovic professed anxiety about missing his electronic works for domestic listening. His interest in event and process was site-specific — or at least demanded the objective "blank canvas" of modern concert hall performance — and he was not sure what the broadcast of his sounds in derivative, non-standard spaces might mean.

Strong ideas have a way of leaving technical limitations. Atrocious translations of Tchaikovsky and Joyce have communicated with unparalleled clarity while hearing the Balinese gamelan on 78 rpm shellac was no barrier for him as keen as those of Messiaen and Boulez. Listening to *La Légende d'Ezer* on CD may be a minor experience compared to witnessing it dominate a prestigious metropolitan space, but because it mixes computer with other music on CD, it develops new facets. From the opening balustrade/clocks harmonies, it's obviously going to be something unusual.

Of course, there are battalions of electronic experimenters out there trying to be "unusual". What is special about Jenakovic's piece is that it respects cumulative logic, but isn't content with a single process. Even if there's nothing here that sounds remotely 'classical', its polyphony is orchestral (indeed, the more 'classical' anything sounds these days, the more likely it is to come from the static, referential world of neo on scene). There are seven levels of conceived development. Philip K Dick structured the plots of his novels on narrative symphonies, setting themes versus counter-themes, and achieved futuristic novels utterly untainted by historical romance. Jenakovic is likewise untrammelled by classical references. Even though he's miles away from any real-time effect, his soundworld will attract anyone who delves in the dose-me sonic criticism of free improvisation (see Adam Bahman, Polwechsel and Baki). The classical element is architectural. Jenakovic works through processes, but has counter-processes occurring simultaneously, so you're never disappointed that an event is nothing but itself. Because we have direct access to the materials of broadcast, this CD is actually a better letter than many acoustic recordings of Jenakovic's concert performances, which can have something martial and pompous about them.

The difficulty of describing *La Légende d'Ezer* is that any image — clouds of weeps debombing empty beer cans rolling on a rubbish tip, worms holes in space spout your pallidating grey matter through auroas, a billion mystic derdits play for grace through collective pain — could apply equally well to electronic releases of easy extremity and las apocalypse. Jenakovic's selection of relevant texts for a printed programme — Plato, Hermes Trismegistus, Pascal and Jean-Paul on infinity, plus Robert P Kinnier on superman (Scientific American, December 1978) —

touches on the misty way in which cosmic "science" resorts to traditional philosophical gambits.

La Légende d'Ezer is conscientiously composed music of unerring logic and rigor. Listened to loud, it's hair-on-end terrifying. At moments you believe cosmic gravitational fields have chosen the centre of your brainpan for a final showdown.

This is more a measure of how alienated we are from cosmic views than anything extreme about Jenakovic as a person (he was actually an unassuming and charming man). The piece is beautifully shaped: as the 'event' which structures it moves, we return to the coasts/quiet landscapes with which we started. This music has 'worth pondering stamped all over it, though quite what it ultimately means still evades me: what can cosmic pianistic scribbles mean next to a building named after Gorge Perropoulos? (BW)

Trombonist/trumpeter **Clifford Thornton**, a significant figure in the mid-60s New York free jazz scene (he appeared on recordings by Archie Shepp, Son Ra, Marjorie Watts, and Sunny Murray, as well as about a half dozen of his own releases), is all but forgotten today. His solo recordings have long been out of print. While the original masters for *Freedom & Unity* (Unheard Music Series ALP225 CD), recorded with his New Art Ensemble generally considered his best work, are now lost, this welcome issue comes thanks to recently rediscovered tapes, and includes two previously unreleased tracks.

The *Freedom & Unity* sessions took place in 1967, but the record (on Thornton's own Third World label) wasn't released until two years later due to distribution difficulties. Recorded, significantly, the day after John Coltrane's New York funeral (with its historic command performances by Albert Ayler and Ornette Coleman), the LP was consecrated by the appearance of Coltrane's bassist Jimmy Garrison as well as sidemen from both Coleman and Archie Shepp. It also featured trumpeter Joe McPhee's moored debut.

The performances on *Freedom & Unity* are 'New Thing' jazz at its wildest and most spirited, somewhere between the controlled collective improvisation of the early Ornette Coleman quartet and the total abandon of Ayler's group (complete with law-mitigating hair changes). Harold Averis' drumming is as uncontrolled by traditional timekeeping structures as Sunny Murray's playing with the Ayler trio, but with a more solid grounding. And what Karl Berger's free, airy playing (especially the extended solo on "15th Floor") is a beautiful counter to the blaring horns of Thornton, McPhee and almost Sonny King. Let's hope this important record now gets the attention it deserves. (OM) [Reviewed by Astar Coward, Dave Mandl, David Keenan, Peter Shapiro and Ben Wilson]



Avant Rock

Reviewed by Edwin Pouncey

ALL GIRL SUMMER FUN BAND K K110 LP

Perennially preened punky pop from a crooning quartet of fun loving, romance seeking girls who hail from Portland, Oregon. Led by Sofies guitarist Jan Stragaa with keyboard player Kim Boster, drummer Kathy Foster and An Douangpan on bass, All Girl Summer Fun Band give the ironic quirkiness of Jonathan Richman And The Modern Lovers to the uprooted rock 'n' roll number of The Ramones, while it all the way up and set their creation free "Cube Pie", "Cut Your Hair" and "Canadian Boyfriend" are all immediate highlights, but their topical "Cell Phone" issue (complete with annoying intro) is particularly worthy of your attention.

THE FALL ARE YOU ARE MISSING WINNER CDD SMISTER CDDYFPH1 CD

Just when you thought that Mark E. Smith had almost got his inner demons under control after bowling you over with the magnificent *The Unrestable*, he instantly sheds any hint of stability and comes back instead with a mean sounding avant rockabilly rock which makes no apparent sense at all. Keep peeling back those ears, though, as the damn thing loud enough to wake the dead, and the new MES experience eventually starts to kick in with a vengeance. Are You Are Missing Winner is perfectly fitted to a flapping version of R. Dean Taylor's classic "Getta See Jare". Around the Smith scoundrels half remembered lyrics and contorts a whirlpool of splintered guitars, disheveled drum and battered bass sounds with a Quasi-modic Gene Vincent leather glove fist that claws even deeper into the raw day of sensation that birthed rock 'n' roll and continues to fuel Smith's unique vision.

GEL FAUST RAVVINDO REMIX KLANGBOOM NO NUMBER CD

Gel are Dave Ball (from Soft Cell) and Ingo Vauk for this project the duo have been handed the master tapes for Faust's impressive *Ravvindo* album and instructed to supply a remix, something for the kids to dance the year to. The results are pretty impressive as the remix to transform the record's "Wir Brauchen Dich #6" into a mechanical best latin floor stopper that (although Faust may fiercely disagree) has elements of Future Days and Can rippling through it. On the more cosmic "Eltopiaque Mir", however, the mood reverts back slightly to the feedback driven ghost-trail ride of the original, which has been thoughtfully tasked on to the end of this to remind you what it sounded like before Ball and Vauk attacked it.

GIANT SNAKE COVER MAGAZINE THRILL JOCKEY THRILL10 CD

How Gell's giant Giant Snake fits back through their respective record collections and pull out a selection of favourite tunes to cover. These

include songs by, among others, Neil Young, Johnny Cash, Nick Cave and, best of all, Black Sabbath. Giant Snake's take on The Sals' idiosyncratic memorable "Iron Horse" is given a lush cocktail jazz treatment which they skewer at the tail end with a sampled bolt of forked lightning, just in case you might have forgotten that it started life as a demonic Heavy Metal number. The rest of *Cover Magazine* is equally popular and enjoyable to flip through, but the nagging feeling that leaks through is that this collection is little more than a respite for Giant Snake until Gell returns from the bunker with enough fresh material to record a real new album.

JOHN PAUL JONES THE THUNDERTHIEF DISCIPLINE DIGITAL MOBILE DDM104 CD

This second solo album from former Led Zeppelin bass player and multi-instrumentalist John Paul Jones boasts Edward Gentry-style cover art and title song lyrics from cartoonist/musican Peter Bregvad. There's also a guest appearance by King Crimson leader/guitarist Robert Fripp, who weighs in with Jones on the opening "Leafy Meadows", a potent pop rock instrumental which clears the way ahead to allow a varied collection of styles to slide into existence. These range from folk rock ("Hoediedie" and "Freedom Song") to Metal inspired dance beats ("Daphne") and even petulant punk rock ("Angry Angry"). The *Thunderthief* has its moments, but even after several repeats the record still sounds like a musical sketchbook for a larger and more complex work.

STEFFEN BASHO JUNGHANS WATERS IN AZURE STRANGE ATTRACTORS AUDIO HOUSE BAAH008 CD

Although Steffen Bascho-Jungmans's playing style has been rightly compared to that of such avant guitarists as John Fahey, Robbie Basho, Derek Bailey and Louis Maczancane Connors, there is also a hint of Quasi-modic Palestine swimming around in there too. The opening part of "Waters I-IV" begins placidly enough, but as he serves to pull out new sounds from his acoustic guitar the twining silver strings seemingly begin to ripole within the instrument — in the same way that Palestine occasionally succeeds in making the strings into his Bösendorfer Grand Imperial come adrift after a burst of intense meditative pounding. Central to Jungmans's playing technique, however, is the *ikoma* school of Fahey, Basho, Peter Lang and Leo Kottke, a style which he has successfully mastered, made his own and extended into the future.

LAMBCHOP IS A WOMAN CITY SLANG 30140 CD/LP

Former sander Kurt Wagner's orchestra sized group finally struck gold with *Nixon*, an album that pushed Country music and soul together and given this new musical hybrid the widest treatment. *Is A Woman* features a more personal set of songs that have been meticulously constructed and designed for a smaller group of musicians. The result is a record that urges you

to lean closer to the speakers in order to fully hear everything that is being played and sung. Wagner's songs hang in the air like spider webs with lyrics that are just as delicately spun to become a snare where your imagination becomes hopelessly entangled. Wagner's admirable refusal to play it safe and produce a *Nixon 2* is comparable to his *Harvest* bestseller in the bud. Not that Lambchop sound anything like Young, you understand, but creatively *Is A Woman* is Wagner's *Dr. The Beach*.

LYDIA LUNCH WITH THE ANUBIAN LIGHTS CHAMPAGNE, COCAINE & NICOTINE STAINS CRIPPLED BICK NOT WAXI CDDWVC027 CD

"The trouble with being so bad... is that it feels so damn good," purrs Lydia Lunch, stretching her claws over us slightly before going for the kill. On this fabulous sounding live track EP she is joined by electro jazz grooves The Anubian Lights from Los Angeles, who supply the perfect hallucinogenic uneasy listening soundtrack to accompany Lydia's cabaret of cruelty. For Champagne, Cocaine & Nicotine Stains she revisits her early Queen Of Sam period, a sleek dominatrix creation of the night who possesses the power to destroy men with a single stare after suffering decades of abuse and humiliation. Lydia vocally weaves through this set of expertly blended Nelson Riddle-style dancefloor demurettes like a female mantis patiently waiting for the right moment to lash out and take your head clean off. It is also the best thing she has done for years and, hopefully, there is more of this collaboration in the can.

POPOL VUH FUTURE SOUND EXPERIENCE MYSTIC MBH111 CD

Legendary Krautrock cosmata Popol Vuh return (slightly) with this remixed and remastered release of an obscure early 90s album. Their recently deceased leader Florian Fricke's trademark atmospheric depth drawings are intricately interlaced with wildlife samples and acoustic guitar embellishments, all of which gradually builds into a grand swell of ambient orchestration. No wonder, then, that when belated German film director Werner Herzog first heard Popol Vuh he decided to incorporate Fricke's conceptions into *Agave Wash Of God*, *Moskito* and *Cobra Verde* to act as the perfect soundtrack for his unworldly cinematic visions. The immediately perceived association of Popol Vuh's music with Herzog probably irritates Fricke's more studious side, but that his past compositions continue to exude such an unpredictable, timeless sense of magic, mystery and nature through the decades is a remarkable accomplishment.

JOEY RAMONE DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME BANCURY SAN108 CD

Although Joey Ramone's (sadly) posthumous solo debut may lack the instant punk rock class of The Ramones' classic first album, there is

enough memorable moments rippling through it to ensure that Don't Worry About Me will be around for a long time. Backed by a group that includes ex-Detector Andy Shernoff on bass guitar, Frank Furresco and Miry Ramone on drums, plus brother Mickey Leigh sharing vocals, Joey hails his way through a speedy set of originals and covers with the same streetwise bravado and inish sense of fun that he had when he was torturing The Ramones. The real surprise here, however, has to be JR's version of the Louis Armstrong hit "What A Wonderful World", which unashamedly punches a celebratory fist of optimism into the air. The result is an anthem which gives the artsy fans, friends and admirers he left behind a sense of new hope for the future. And what a wonderful world it really would be if Joe's swains managed to soar to the top of the singles chart.

TEENAGE FANCLUB & JAI FAIR WORDS OF WISDOM AND HOPE GEOGRAPHIC GEOG14 CD

The not so odd coupling of ex-Half Japanese mannam Jai Fair with west of Scotland indie scene teenage Fanclub has produced a powerful album of songs and music which both parties can deservedly be proud of. *Words Of Wisdom And Hope* goes back to the simplistic roots of Fair and TFC, a move which (after so many side projects) reaffirms their value as individual performers, musicians, artists and thinkers. Don "Face To You" Fair squares up to a legion of teenage movie monsters to prove that his love is real, sounding not unlike a teen Lou Reed. Elsewhere this vocal affectionation joins forces with TFC's guitar riffing for "Crash On You", where the full force of this heavenly union suddenly surges into action with a beat that echoes the hypnotic thrum of the Velvet in full "What Goes On" ecstasy.

ZAPPATISTAS LIVE IN LEEDS JAZZPIPT JPM132 CD

Frank Zappa died in LA on 4 December 1993. Since then his musical legacy has been kept alive by making previously unreleased archive material available and allowing various classical, rock and jazz groups to make their own personalised homages to his music. Cultured, King Etheridge's octo-Zappatistas are the latest in a longish line of 72 tribute groups whose performance at the Wordrobe in Leeds in November 1999 has been captured on this CD. To his credit, Etheridge has picked an interesting selection of compositions from his heretofore sprawling songbook to mangle — the opening medley of "Heavy You A Beast", "Oh No" and "Theme From Lumpy Gray" being particularly inspired — but to manufacture what must have been a cherished memory of the event for all concerned into a permanent keepsake was not a smart move. Although Zappatistas know all the jazz acrobatics that make Zappa's music work, they seriously ignore the underlying psychedelic surrealism and social cynicism which made it special. ☹

Critical Beats

Reviewed by Philip Sherburne

BEATLESS

LIKE SUGAR LIKE RAIN/
THE TRUTH REMIXES

UBIQUITY UBT1204 12"

The duo of Alex Atlas and Talvin' Lou's Paul Martin previously released "Like Sugar Like Rain" on their LP *Life Mirrors*. It's an eclectic mix of African percussion, keys and snaky bass, pushed into the ether by Colonel Red's spooky falsetto. Atlas's "Neodani Mar" carries away the flesh to reveal a shuddering, angular skeleton, and he marches it unthinkingly forward like some kind of broken beat Terminator. King Birds' "Soule Mu" of The Truth Part Two is much more polite, with the rounded pads and aquatic bass that characterise every Soule outing, but there's something indignantly rough in the loosely pasted together breaks. In fact, it's probably the most rocky thing they've ever done, and that's a good thing. Still, it lacks direction, as though it's despondent to the surface and couldn't make up its mind which way to explore. Even the most experienced discs run out of air at some point, and as the track nears its eighth minute, you wish he'd just give a hug on the hose, already.

DAVID CARON INCIDENT REPORT

MUSIC FOR SPEAKERS MMS-EP 12"

This Dutch venture of Mr Wax and Eucalyptus mixes a familiar vein of cushioned downtempo, but he does it with grace and a confidently understated voice. At times you wish he leaned a little less on the string presets, but when he fits them like glossy, vintage, New Order, you can't really argue. His dry, way features just beg to be fingered, but at first contact they drop away to reveal forthright sub-bass that sleeps usefully like a stiff seismic fault. "It's a five track, offering tricolore, appropriated boules and dreamy-eyed pastoral waxes like Bounce Of Canada, but "Incident Report" really is the standout, with its hissing under two-line glide and positively optimistic chord progressions. It's not afraid to keep the chin up, and these days we could probably use as much of that as we can get.

DIVERSE MOVE

CHOCOLATE INDUSTRIES CHIT104 CD

CAURAL PAINT

CHOCOLATE INDUSTRIES CHIT104 CD

PUSH BUTTON OBJECTS 360° REMIXES

CHOCOLATE INDUSTRIES CHIT116 CD

Chocolate Industries returns from a brief hiatus with a new focus, shedding many of the IDM shoppings of yore in favour of pure, unadorned HipHop. The debut from Diverse - Chicago's Kenny Jenkins, in cahoots with Ted Sirota and Jonathan 217's Matt Lee - pulls the plug in pursuit of a relaxed, organic sound. "Move" revolves around a piano line that sounds like a melancholic Vienna Gershwini, and it rocks with the simple anti-bravado conveyed in straightforward lines like, "I got rhythm like a handshake." "What I Do" uses a similarly less piano loop, spilling

chords that seem to slide like oil slicked on the surface of water; the chorus disturbs the serenity with whitecapped scratching. "The Unrefined" shelves the samples for live drums, bass and guitar, favouring chords that refuse to settle down. It may be unpolished, but there's a very intense conceit in the track's spare frame.

Carat, on the other hand, offers straight-up shoegazing, with more than a little Mr Moody Valentine to their chard rushes and back-loaded piano, and samples of supposedly Sterberlike-like pop songs. And with contemporaries Minorus Shock and Head, they're grafting the familiar back-sitter of leftfield electronica onto a more eclectic, pastoral frame. "Red Sunset" falls somewhere between Frigate and Steve Reich, building an increasingly dense construction of strummed guitar and various acoustic broods. "Your Memories On Television" drills an instant sense figure through the blurring folds of Talk Talk like obelisk and keys. Samples of black young women talking about "dressing on ourselves with markers" add an oddly erotic touch.

There's certainly nothing sexy about Push Button Objects' "360°", a compressed, ultimately beatless beatless byproducts from DJ Case that fly by like paper bags being buffeted by bus exhaust, with Mr Lu and Del The Funky Homosapien delivering doctored prophecy from the street-corner. The remixes (by DJ Spinn, Prefuse 73, Kot Masta Kurt, The Herbaliser and EP) are hit and miss, with Spinn, Kurt and The Herbaliser trying to funk things up to no purpose. EP and Prefuse-73, at least, seem to get the point even if their remixes don't quite match the original. (PVG review: Peter Shapiro)

EL-P

STEEPFATHER FACTORY

DEF JUV CLUT12 12"

"Ladies and gentlemen" says El-P speaking as CEO of the Steepfather factory. I propose that the market is sinking under the weight of the useless objects added to the shopping carts of all working families." But hold on wrapped around that radically commensurate sphenon is a modest portrait of dystopian dimensions, announcing "the age of familial industry: building tomorrow's fathers today." Plenty of pundits have agonised over the "crisis of masculinity" affecting the HipHop community, but El-P takes it on with Swahili sensibility, underpinning his jobs with characteristically summing beats and overdriven keyboards. As for the product, it runs on boom, so "plug it in, give it a name, man of the house, self-sustained, weave the pants, you can relax, one of the pack, nuclear lion - literally nuclear." This gives a whole new meaning to the phrase, "that shit's gonna blow up."

ART KONIK

FINGER

COMET COMETOS 12"

The Parisian percussionist and producer Nicholas Garg, aka Art Konik, has a handful of worthwhile 12"s to his name already, rewarded by requests West London talent like Stephane Atlas. But here, assisted by pianist Bobby Few, he takes his sound much deeper into abstraction. Few builds

unstable towers out of blocked chords before knocking them down with a listless sweep of the hand, while Konik sets rolling congas in motion: a strangely phased triangle, as though sampled off melted cassette tape, chirps over the muted proceedings like a sick insect. The effect, oddly enough, is like a jazz workout of Marilyn Crispell's Rhythms Hung in Undrawn Sky.

MISS BOMBAY 1974 MAHATMATRONIC/ HINDUSTAN AMBASSADOR

MINT CONDITION MINT1001 12"

According to the press release, Geeta Chawla was the title of Miss Bombay 1974, released the single "Hindustan Ambassador" in 1975, heard for half a decade, then retired from showbusiness to run the Powder Girls cosmetics company, before the suave Swase Hakan Lidoo lived her back into the studio last year to rework her "ethnodisco classic". A touching story except there is something of a notorious prankster and numerous Internet searches failed to corroborate the story. In any case, the automotive anthem in question (the Hindustan Ambassador is a classic Indian knock-off of the Morris Minor) finds Lidoo in relaxed House mode, gridding thral on the congas and feathered handclaps, with going Indo-disco samples threading through the loose groove. The flip is like a dub of the same, full of the kind of slack beats that make Music For Freaks so infectious.

RJD2

HERE'S WHAT'S LEFT

ALTERED VIBES/BATTERSEA PARK MUSIC

ANNO3-BPM005 12"

This could be the most affecting HipHop record this year, the Columbus, Ohio producer's entire soul is so lovingly it takes your breath away. Like water over rocks, a cool Rhodes line rolls down over a dry, buffeted beat, and a forlorn, uncredited vocal takes you back to every lick of all-nighter you ever lived. It's worlds away from the comparatively hard-edged production of Def Juv, for whom it's putting together his debut LP. The B-side is a little more what you would expect, with a grey piano holding down a unyielding soul jam, smeared with groovy horns and then wiped clean. Hell, even the bonus beat is worth having here: looping horns and piano like a rougher Pete Rock.

SOUL DESIGNER

EP1

PI COMMUNICATIONS P148 12"

Belgium's Fabrice Jut sure isn't worried about masking his influences. The first track is called "Detroit Sound", and built from a squelching, analogue bassline, fat chord washes and jittery, breakbeat-inspired percussion, that's exactly what you get. Still, it knows how to work a formula to positive effect. "Deep in My Heart", with its squigly high note, and dry weeper-razzle percussion, sounds a lot like Morgan Geist, as does the cheery, radiant "12 Months Of Hiphopness", with chords so rich they're the musical equivalent of fog gas. As does the closing "Smile, Light And Shadows", for that

matter. Make no doubt, it's a genre record, but then, what isn't these days?

SUPERSOUL SOUND CLASH

METRONIX MXX108 12"

Feedback guitar whirring flies up the latest slice of weirdo HipHop from Miami's Drem Demetron, and it's among his best work yet. A slew of Mics - Skam, Dynas, Judah Marston - drop bubble rhymes, and Miah chanteuse Juliet delivers a warbled refrain reminiscent of Tilly's collaborators of yore that should raise the hackles on your neck. But the genius here is in Demetron's production, assisted by Push Button Objects and with scratches courtesy of The Alkaloids. Informative: lurching beats that stagger around the one, faded horn stabs, disembodied basslines and Hammonds trembling like nervous antenae. Supersoul's a portraitist, but every deft's placed with the precision of a wet, jabbing fist: his tracks display the kind of meanness that bring out the inessential in you. Fat John's horns, meanwhile, get all misty with Days Of Our Lives-ready piano licks and a jiggly-slow-gang stutter, but the off-key bits stave off complacency.

VARIOUS

MINT CONDITION 1: MINTSTYLE

MINT CONDITION MINT1001 12"

Almost against my better judgement, this compendium from the Mint Condition crew has quickly become one of my favourite two-step records. Some of the vocals are almost unbearably cheery - Magic Funk's "Dreamer" offers a vocoded refrain over brry appages that wouldn't sound out of place on a Hi-NRG record. But dig a little deeper and you'll find Mint producers Zoom & DBI (not the Detroit Blow producer) grunting out rough-hewn breakbeats, hovering bass stabs and ample rare burps and groovy snippets. The keys here that truncated artificiality of the days when producers hadn't yet learned to craft a proper waveform, and it all sounds like a less frenzied take on Basement Jaxx's brand of earnest chaos. Almost all of the elements are well past their sell-by date, but, grafted onto nasty Break-Step rhythms, they came off as a brilliant tribute to the surprising resilience of ostensibly disposable dancefloor culture.

VELOCETTE

JULY & AUGUST - 4/4

DUB/AMIN.D

PARALLEL RECORDINGS PRL10010 10"

Jason Williams delivers two highly worked, propulsive tracks that twist up time - they're late 2001 productions, but they draw heavily on early to mid-90s Techno motifs. "July & August" skips along as though running over rain-slicked top-rim. Williams's mosaic like constructions contribute to the story; look every synopsized tone is lifted a different shade of the same basic colour. For all the organic metaphor, though, the track's roots are planted deeply in Detroit Techno's electronic soul. On "A.M.I.N.D.", as rains down and canyons deep grooves in the shape of rising 303 lines, running out in its rivulets reminiscent of DBX's sleep tracks. ☐

Dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

THE BUG VS THE ROOTSMAN FEATURING HE-MAN KILLER/VERSION RACER A VINYL RECORD 7"

Named after the radical featurer the late Peter Hook, this label, bearing the legend "Made in Babylon", sets high expectations. Kevin Martin, the half of the Animal that is The Bug, has asked John Robinson to bring the vocals from the multitracks of selected DJ collaborations. He-Man's vocals on "Killer," already a track of spry, vibrant, now comes enriched with a jungle of growl in 100 per cent proof rum on top of a rhythm to which the word "beat" cannot be applied. A crunching, heaving, brittle, metal lurch of a thing, particularly on the version where a crimping distortion applied to the DJ brings a modicum of relief to the unrelenting sonic violence.

BOBBY DIGITAL/VARIOUS FLAG FLOWN HIGH: THE BEST OF BOBBY DIGITAL'S ROOTS PRODUCTIONS MAXIMUM PRESSURE MP001 CD

The new label Maximum Pressure is a joint venture between Pressure Sounds, DJ-R's Sound's sister label dedicated to the revival of classic reggae, and Francesco's Maximum Sound imprint which, up to now, has focused on contemporary dancehall sounds issued on a 7" single format. First up is a set defined to become a modern classic: Bobby Digital was a graduate from Prince Jammy's Waterhouse academy of sound and these tunes date from the decade following his departure from his mentor's studio in 1969. Flag Flown High compiles not only some of the best of Bobby Digital's productions for his own Digital B label, but also a clutch of unreleased cuts such as the startling opener from the late Garnett Silk, "Myote Chant," which utilizes a loop from Jah Bob's "Natural Mystic" for its rhythmic bed. No slackness to be found here of course, and for all Shabba Ranks' non-PC pedigree his "Heart Of A Lion," a pean to ghetto politics, is reggae at its most committed, powerful and compelling. Amongst the 18 tracks are contributions from Yami Bolo, Sista, Cocoa Tea, Morgan Heritage, Capleton and more. Unfolding

DERRICK HARRIOTT PRESENTS SCRUB-A-DUB CRYSTAL DHA45 12"

The album most often quoted as 'classic early dub' are Nathi Hudson's *Pick A Dub* and Herman Chin Loy's *Aquarius Dub*. In the last few years both of these have become available once more, after long absences from the catalogue. Also deserving of inclusion in this archive category are the early instrumental dub albums by Derrick Harriott who was already a successful artist, producer and businessman by the time the dub sound became predominant in the mid to late 70s. Whether you know the tunes or not this is a great dub album. Harriott's treatment of "Shall I Remind you the old folk" changes in a reggae style, and like many of the instrumental albums from around the time the 'heavy' channels on the mixing desk allowing in ghostly remnants of

dropped voices and players makes the whole thing even more beguiling.

LÖBE RADIANT DUB SYSTEM AFTER BEFORE AFTER CD

Félicien Lunaire has morphed from the stretched ambience of *Misc-Mag* through Webcam, his solo dubby project for Noise-Massus, into this newer, more telecastistic new as Löbe. It's largely bass driven, with no room for the busy language that occasionally graced his previous work. Once past the Dangers tortoise phase on "Fugl," more dubby textures begin to appear on "Tonnline," and although "When Jupiter Attacks With Mars" sounds like a reference to Hair, it's more Hardix versus Scientist. Lunaire is still in experimental mode and almost there.

BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS TRENCHTOWN ROCK TROJAN TROJ00010 3XCD

Probably the most aggressively marketed reggae artist in history, Marley's legacy has turned up in more jackets than anyone can count by now. Still, this collection covering the early period 1969-78 contains most of the Wailers' least affected and most ecstatic tracks, many of them early takes that would later turn up re-recorded during the island years. The pleading quality of Marley's voice has not yet succumbed to the earnestness of his later years, and the more pop orientated productions of Lee Perry and Bunny Regie are sparklingly present. (Rob Young)

AUGUSTUS PABLO THIS IS AUGUSTUS PABLO AUGUSTUS RECORDS AUGUSTUS CD

The late melodic toter's first album, dating back to 1974, is back on the streets again—and worth noting because this is among the best music Pablo ever put out. Produced by Clive Chin and originally released on the Topical label, this is a collection of instrumentals on which Pablo demonstrates his keyboard skills on piano, organ and clavinet as well as his beloved melodica. Recorded at Randy's, the mix and remix engineer is Errol Thompson. The earlier rebel *For East* favoured rock hit "Jaw" is included, and there are three certified stone classics in "Dub Organism," "Dread Eye" and "Gauding Red." This album makes sense of all that follows in this musician's extraordinary catalogue.

LEE PERRY & FRIENDS A LIVE INJECTION: ANTHOLOGY 1968-1979 TROJAN TROJ0485 CD

Back to Parnyard, where, as always, all is not as it seems. Appearing more or less at the same time as the woful Jamaican ET, and on the same label, here are 44 succinctly stated reasons why the most prolific and prolific of Jamaican artists has a right to be adored. This anthology is part of the release of the Trojan catalogue following its absorption into the independent empire that is the Cadogan corporation, with other double retrospective sets equally worthy of attention coming from Gregory Isaacs, Ken

Scotch, The Ethiopians and Roots & The Maytals. The Perry canon runs from 1969—the height of Perry's popularity amongst the warring UK mod contingent—to 1979, by which time he had achieved even higher heights when the warring word that was the Black Ark, it would be foolish to quibble over the selection on this set, which is about as good as you are going to get, minus early dub sides and some of the island stuff, and, of course, anything containing Carlton & The Slickee "Better Days" was never having. Excellent artwork and sleeve notes bode well for the new regime at Trojan. Meanwhile, for a beginner's guide to Scratch, start right here.

BRENDA RAY DREAM/ANOTHER DREAM TAMOKI WAMISSI TW00068 1"

Brenda Ray will be familiar to observers of the Liverpool scene as part of the NAARU organisation, who dubbed it up consistently through the 80s, and also as Brenda of Brenda & The Beachfalls fame. Over the past few years, together with cohort The Minister Of Noise, she has been aiding and abetting the Spanish loan postmaster and artist/producer Roy Cousins, one of The Royals, in his programme of reuniting and reusing selections from his Tamoki Wamissi imprint. This 7" is purportedly pressed up at Jamaica; if so, the vinyl and presser must have been imported as the finished product has no pits or bumps at all. All the better for Brenda to exercise her love of the R&B genre, specifically its beauty-doo-doo manifestations, in this sensually infectious cut which could translate easily into a leftfield discotheque favourite. Personally, the 1" is not a dub of the vocal, but a different tune altogether.

LERGY SMART MIRROR MIRROR REMYTIME FM15 7"

This classic 7" makes a welcome reappearance. The fearsome Leroy Smart was a vocalist of choice for producer Jimmy Hart. Rawday As to be expected, here he does not enquire, but rather threatens the mirror on the wall, on what otherwise would be a rather cheery tune, and the dub, as with all Rawday's dubs, is class A1, with superb chunky mix and classy bass action.

TOSCA DIFFERENT TASTES OF HONEY G-STORE G22 AX12"

In true vintage-to-vintage fashion, Vennisse duo Tosca—aka Richard Dorfmeister and Rupert Huber—weigh in with 13 tastes of "Honey" across eight sides of vinyl. After the bass driven mix from the Soto Sultans' Markus Kienzl, where the source remains identifiable, the other remains bent to take the track further out. Face Active sassa-kick the rhythm with rapid style Brazilian percussion, smooth out the vocal samples and drop in a black style breakbeat, whereas Biggie B (ex-Roberts Hi-Fi man Gian Dini) accents a ragged Rasta groove after a burst of bassline riffs and later what sounds like a Big Youth sample for *Never Top* for effort, though is Germany's Supastone, aka Michael Baumann, who has learned how to phase-wah-

wah and percussion with an admirable restraint and creates enough space in the second of his dubs to let a wandering mind do the rest. Dorfmeister obviously loves his dubs, and this is a no dub the way it should be.

VARIOUS BY SPECIAL REQUEST HEARTBEAT HB7799 CD

18 tunes selected from the Treasure Isle vaults of Duke Reid by Heartbeat's Chris Wilson with a well judged mix of familiar and rare tunes. So, although by no means a 'classic' collection, this turns out to be a good thing as there are far too many shoddy products currently claiming to represent the work of this particular producer which recycle the same old tracks, artist great ones. Collectors and enthusiasts will perk up to find The Vectors' "You Can't Stop Me" with its DJ version by the mysterious Dynamic Men, "Boss Boss," and there's a nice Justin Hinds tune "Time Pass By." Other appearances from such vintage stalwarts as Tommy McCook, U Roy, Dennis Alcapone, Ken Parker, John Holt and The Techniques mean this release, like most from this label, can be purchased with confidence.

VARIOUS THE GROOVE CORPORATION PRESENTS REMIXES FROM THE ELEPHANT HOUSE GUIDANCE GFC000000 CD

Birmingham meets Chicago in a dub remix showdown. Over the past few years Groove Corporation have been busy on the remix duties and here they partner with Guidance in a *Black & Fire Select Cuts* style. Although some of the tracks look unlikely candidates—hasn't everyone agreed that it's not a good idea to remix Marley & The Wailers unless you travel back in time to the Black Ark and pull in a dub from Tiptopline Hi-Fi? do we really need another attempt at "Coconut In My Brain?"—others work well enough to rescue this concept. The tracks that work best feature the less obscure source material like Bobby Womack's "Across 110th Street" and Ennio Morricone's "Gloosia, Gloosia".

VARIOUS READY WHEN YOU READY SMUGG CD SMUG00007 CD

As the release focus is now moving from roots to the digital era, there is potential for the intervening dancehall period to be lost in the process of revision. Although DJ Lee tended to be mainly of the tedious brown-diddy-bong-bong variety, dancehall brought a lot of younger vocalists with attitude into the studio and helped revive the careers of those older singers who were prepared for the test. Smugg picks up a bunch of tunes from the Uptempo vaults of Super Minot and Steve King with all due from this 'lost period', consisting mostly of cuts from top vocalists—Horace Andy, Freddie McKay, Barrington Levy, Junior Reid, Jahi Johnson, Jahi Johnson, Jahi Johnson—but none surpasses the frankly bizarre opener from the late Leroy Sae, "Golden Hen." A dub set is promised shortly with mixes from Tubby and Chemist. □

HipHop

Reviewed by Dave Tompkins

BEATNUSS CLASSIC NUSS VOL 1 LOUD 12864 CD

It's funny how Beatnuts once rapped about record shopping. "I know a lot of spots (I ain't put you up on)/Find your own beats, Southpawheads," since children's educational records like Sing! The Hit Songs Of Sesame Street couldn't be further from the Beatnuts' style. We wanna kick, drink and smoke some shiz'. Deep loops have always been the first last of crate thugs Psycho Les, Ju-Ju and Fashion (now solo), a sonic selectivity that made their 'tright as wit' flow and toker stop humour seem like harmless afterthoughts. Included here are early classics like "Rage Of The Tez" and "Progs Over Burn." On "Off The Beats," Big Pun is "making dubs run" and not hearing between words as on his tragic last gasps on wax. The two cuts that go to Greg Nice for the type man hook shot are two too many. Missing is "Psycho Over" of the red skitter, and don't look now because "Are You Ready?" is nowhere to be found. The latter is a classic because it plays the dahl dough to vocalise a Bill Oggett bassline and uses the voice at the beginning of the intro flip of Fantasy 3's monument, "Bites In The City." "What we gon do right here...". Not much, because we can!

BLACKALICIOUS MAKE YOU FEEL THAT WAY/ PARAGRAPH PRESIDENT MCA MCAD00117 CD

Come spring, "Make You Feel That Way" will make me miss hearing whistled, but then again, that's one less daydreaming road romance you have to worry about. The trumpet is pretty enough to stop traffic, the beat slips from bumper to bumper with UMC north while you stare at the bird caw on your windshield, wondering how the strings make it all so haunting. "When I gone more likely you'll notice me," says Gab, already out of the windo' raving rants' emotions dancing and saving the deaf, dumb and blind. Inspired by a De La line, a demo version of "Paragraph President" first appeared on *Soleiades* '91 mixtape. Radio Solo, along with a live recording of "Word Of Mouth." On this upgrade, X-Cel solidifies words with piano and Gab is "cold cleaning clocks, nothing left for the janitor." That's the most-mentioned custodian from a Richard Matheson story, the one with the third eye in the back of his head who turns houses into spaceships.

JEL 10 SECONDS MUSH MC009 CD

Those hopeless MCs in So Solid Crew may need 21 seconds to rock the mic, but any real HipHop head knows you only need ten to move the crowd. Named after the amount of sampling time available on the ultimate HipHop instrument, *Ultrabeat* (producer-for-hire Jels' latest print is an extended low letter to the SP-1200 sampler) the track titles are even named after the function buttons and knobs on the machine). As journalist Oliver Wong points out in his sleeveless, Jels SP-1200 beat is dry and dusty, even if it's an Olivia Newton-John loop

you're running through it, making it a funk instrument as on a pair with a wheezing Hammond and an 'on the beat' wuh-wah pedal. On 10 Seconds Jels displays these qualities admirably, while also indulging in the SP-1200's penchant for a detached, faded emotional, elegant quality that Q! Shadow first coaxed from the sampler's dust and truncate functions and its drum machine-like pads. (Peter Shapiro)

MARVELOUS THREE RAPPIN' ALL OVER BRASS RECORDINGS BRD020006 12"

Busy Bee's Old School phrase "hear your socks" is important because you can't want those tubes to stink stuf and do the Walk without you. Terry Lewis produced this 1980 gem featuring the Chief Rawles himself. While Busy may still be winning from Moo Dee's infamous snits ("but that bow-die-bow-bullshit on A&R"), his '91 going on 89' album produced by Jazzy Jay and Diamond was surprisingly good when most of his peers had slipped. On "Rappin' All Over" the congas are clipped as Busy Bee comes to earth on a metronome, takes Al Scott to a special room and gives him the power to rhyme. The Marvellous three is Son of Hollywood Q! Smaller, another perk legend who later recorded "We're Getting Paid" for HBO Records. At all this means nothing to you, and pioneer-sighted rap is not your bag, the disco-funk instrument is long enough to make you do the Fats Dake until you puke.

MISTER CEE MISTER CEE PRESENTS BROOKMAN'S FINEST FREESTYLES WAX KINNOZ CRE 118 12"

While it's hard to catch the 'booh, yee' feeling, Ol Mister Cee captures Biggie and Pac sharing the stage and ill-fated notions of invincibility. Biggie brags about his tons of girls and cracks a cup on Coldtown's 357. MC Hammer's spandee halfing game. The clean version of Biggie freestyles would be useless except the blank disc caps can be spliced together and dubbed over Big Scooby's weak rhymes and the silence can lament Big Daddy Kane's dancer being allowed on the mic and this record. Kane himself needs space. "I only know one nigga that could come next to me/No there's a little 'cause I can't count my own shadow." A young Jay-Z and Jaz do their floppy triplet style that Kane helped pioneer. On the B side, one throws on a Hiogo-style cello instrumental and Biggie asks, "Who you choose: the weak MC or the black fat MC?" and creates a new lyrical spooze: the Back-slipped hypotensitis. Meanwhile, the preposterous Busta Rhymes sings leathers from *Rebels*' second album. Spend the money on a Maxwell and have a friend dub you Best Of Biggie, an essential tape of rantes back when it was all a dream.

NEW FRESH UNDERSTANDING BIG DADA B00101 CD

It might be worth noting the date in your diary for future reference, two great British HipHop records in the same issue (see P Brothers

below). While the P Brothers succeed by literally reproducing every detail of Fort Apache in the Midlands, New Fresh's Part 2, Roobie Raynor and Juice Alem get over by creating just about the most unique HipHop record to hail from these shores. You couldn't convince Prince, PUTS, Or On/Trinbald to get anywhere near the beats on Understanding, and that's the record's strength. Instead of obsessing over 'hankie styles, *Understanding* Part 2 totally ignores any of HipHop's competing orthodoxies, fashioning beats and atmospheres that have more to do with Derrick May, Larry Heard, Dave Kelly, Wookie and some monarch Sugar Blue than any of the boom beat or bring bling that has ossified into HipHop. Roobie and Juice's lyrics similarly follow their own vapour trail through the rap cosmos: while Roobie muses about a dancing Queen Elizabeth and "congas dancing/merely", Juice Alem manages to rescue something worthwhile from Damien Hirst's dexter la bourgeoisie schtick: "See me now, chasing a holy cow for art's sake/sensate, they hung me in the Tate/Hooks through the hole of my neck...". carabobolic anarchy! shows/digger this freepower, moving them all down/Defiant giant clout drive-bys in a Robin Reelant". (Peter Shapiro)

P BROTHERS NOTTINGHAM BRONX EP HEAVY BRONX HB005 12"

Romancing the BX can be disheartening when Experience Music Project is using bag bank to Misfist through the L Brothers' closet for Old School flex. But P Brothers, plus P and very mean it, whether overwearing Johnny Lyons for Big Daddy or brandishing the motto, "Fuck fashion give me loud drums", on their monstrously preserved Taylor sleeves. On the title cut, the beat shadow-slaves with Ultra's "Feelin' it" until the end when it throws an arrack boots and bounces all over the village. MC Caspo is there for every stamp, spitting in the muckholes. Trinbald's beats may be awarded but it's good to see someone just beat the hawk out of some drums and honour backward stabs Caspo then pops bubble letters on "Rock The City." "Watch the words expand and blow apart". And what a more life-affirming than a Vocoder growling, "We're dealing with a lot of science motherfucker!" The dug fusly funk in the trailer of "J Boogie's Mum" makes us happy RZA hitched it up to the Wu's monster nuckas ("Soul Power") so Flavor Flav could scold some fatback in the flatbed. Like a rock.

VARIOUS AFRICA RAPS TRICKN'T L0004 CD

If they don't make their way to the sidewalk merchants playing their tracks on Broadway and Fulton Street in New York, major label cassettes that don't pass quality control seemingly get shipped to the West's dumping ground, West Africa. In 1991 that meant a surfeit of Phil Collins, Joe Strummer and Moderns tapes, massed at the wrong speed circulating around the markets in Oaker and Bamako. Luckily for

the inhabitants of Senegal and Mali, this practice now means that they are dropping in Jay-Z, Or On, MC Solar and NIM. Africa Raps is the first major survey of African HipHop and amply illustrates the pleasures and difficulties of syncretism. Perhaps inevitably, the biggest tracks back home are the ones that most successfully ape American and French styles, and more inevitably, these are the tracks that will fail on local ears abroad. The most interesting tracks to Western ears are probably Gekki-Bi System's "Kassal" (ironically produced by an American), Djafy's "Milita", Ista Pouta's "Bedeia" (inspired under the auspices of the radical rap troupe Dabate), Les Escrocs' "Primes" and Positive Babat's Les Encreur cover of Orchestre Babat's "Boul Ma Mina", all of which work traditional music into their beats, somehow making koss and nggris float within HipHop's rigid myther matrix. (Peter Shapiro)

X-CUTIONERS LET IT BANG/XL LOUD LP0443 12"

If MOP's voices were pitted against P Brothers' drums, we'd have what my fifth grade fractions teacher Mrs Hassett would call "cross cancellation". Freshly passed off from a 'please god, no collaboration with LFO (no, not that LFO, but the odious Lyle Furios Ones), Lil' Fame and Billy Guez screen for vengeance over Metal guitar blasts and enough humble extremes to earn the former X-Men their own X-shaped podium at *SlamChix* 2000. On the X-cappella, somebody screams, "Where's the beat?" The beat is chased out the building by monstrous laughter, some blammy blasts and even more scorching to dash your dead air capes... like one of those deceptive late 80s a cappellas, where warm-ups are left in to give you a false sense of the beat-drop butterfly. On the title, Large Professor stalks through the gunsmoke with a Queens authority, armed with low acoustic guitar and his favorite Chuck Brown record.

YOUNGER GENERATION WE RAP MORE MELLOW BRASS RECORDINGS BRD020004 12"

In 1979, when I was listening to RED Speedwagon, a sticker was slapped on this record accurately boasting "1 1/2 minutes of rappin' rapture". Younger Generation is Q! Flash & The Furious Five, rap-Superheroes. "The group sounds like a funky Punjabi arrangement, but again there's Terry Lewis, doing the time bender. On this essential reborn, the future Furious phrase Flash but Flash doesn't do anything because he was busy lunging for his cup of Chantal Curts's harmonica classic, "Get Another Love" — the basslines are practically disco twins, born the same year at a similar shopping guitar pace. Mc Ness will always be Scorpiochild and Milla, the deci-baby, lowers his lids before *The Late Great Cowboy*, man with a low-angled voice, took his personality post the Village People outfits and went on the outside. "I ride in the ring and I'm here to play/In a backdoor of the boogie/All the buffalo room when I pass through". ☐

Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Bill Shoemaker

BERESFORD/THOMAS/ WESTON 3 PANOS EMANCIP 4064 CD

From the placement of the panos in an equilateral triangle to the almost Pythagorean ratios of roles played pieces and freely improvised tunes and duos, 3 Panos is a finely designed program. The central logic of the music is much closer to ritual formality than pub gig spunk. Still, there are more clusters and interludes made by any one of the pianists on this disc than at heard in a decade in any concert hall. The full force of Steve Beresford, Pat Thomas and Vernon Weston would be given short shrift if compared to a Nancarrow piano roll or The Piano Choir, and their subtle cohesion would be diminished by suggestions of compositional gravity. Time will tell, but this has the makings of a real watershed.

BERGMAN/BAUER/MANERI THE RIVER OF SOUNDS BOCA-HOLDER 864284 CD

Berak Bergman is occasionally mistaken for two or more pianists. His left hand can play dazzling complex materials as dextrously and powerfully as many pianists' right. His equally formidable hands are also completely independent, capable of spooling out two thick spun threads simultaneously. While his skills are in ample evidence on *The River Of Sounds*, he reportedly says things up with his comping, prodding vocalist Matt Maneri (who plays an electric six string waltz throughout the disc) to jettison his laconic (yomim in flavor of heated bowing, and trombonist Conny Bauer to disperse with his well etched overbass and below underbass). Given the material, the passages of undine calm between storms are a balm. Although dotted with tranquil eddies, *The River Of Sounds* has enough rapids to captivate the unprepared listener.

JEB BISHOP TRIO/QUARTET AFTERNOONS COKKASIK 001/3039 CD

Trombonist Jeb Bishop is arguably the most personable composer in the Chicago scene orbiting around Ben Verdemark. Brimming with solid tunes and spirited interplay, *Afternoons* finds Bishop refining his smart amalgamation of post-JJ Johnson vocabularies, and reinforcing the savvy rapport he has established with bassist Kent Resnick and drummer Tim Muhlenba. Gueststar Jeff Parker fits in well on four tracks, adding dollops of sleek and streaks of streamlined jazz pastiches.

ANTHONY BRAXTON'S EIGHT COMPOSITIONS (QUINTEET) 2001 CMP 345 CD

Lately Anthony Braxton's Ghost Dance Music has been under a steady bombardment from otherwise sympathetic critics. "Pleading" is the most frequent charge lodged against the GJM's unson lines of overly advanced, equally valued notes. *Eight Compositions* (Quintet) 2001

places the GJM within the rhythmic context of African percussion, which, combined with the progressively reinterpreted shape-shifter of "Fourth Avenue" GJM, results in music that breathes fully and consciously styles. Drummers Sipho Robert Bellegere, Allen Benjamin Carter Sr. and his son, Allen Jr., are attentive to the contours of the materials while layering shades of traditional rhythms. The interaction between Braxton and saxophonist-Klausur A. McGehee III is more flexible and conversational than the larger horn sections on previous GJM recordings. McGehee is an intriguing presence, whose maturity is evident in the subdued roughness of his tenor and the well honed fluidity of his soprano. Braxton immerses complicity with his 94 Leo duets with Ghanaian drum master Abraham Adzinyah. In demonstrating the GJM's relationship to African music, Braxton has opened a new point of entry into this phase of his work.

TOBIAS DELIUS 4TET PELLIKANISMUS ICP 026 CD

Four groups encapsulate the gracelessness and the eagerness of New Dutch Swing like Tobias Delius's 4tet. The leaders' tenor saxophone can muddle the much speed tempo of drummer Han Benrik, the nasty huge scowles and madcap snippets of collect Tristen Homsinger and the ominous growl of bassist Joe Williamson into an infectious groove. Conversely, Delius's clarinet can cleave the same elements to create a braiding dissonance. Recorded over a three day club stop, *Pellikanismus* documents how they can whip up lively swinging tunes and estranged, fragmented impressions with the serene disarming offhandness: Liv, Delius, Benrik, Homsinger and Williamson somehow create an overarching festivity from these occasionally disorderly materials, a phenomenon this album vividly captures.

JOHNNY DYANI & MAL WALDRON DUO JAZZ UNITE JAZZ ASS BOER JAZZ UNITE 102 CD

The plumpness of exiled South African Johnny Dyan's bass was a fine foil for the mid-register, jabbing chords and very blues lines of pianist Mal Waldron on this 1981 Paris performance. The programme is formulaic: vamp-anchored tunes at the top, a Dyan's lacy in Africa traditional singing, a hand-dicked jazz waltz, a slow blues and a drama-souped finale to tie it all out. Still, there is a chemistry between Waldron's refined line and Dyan's finely vented outrage and passion that produces some compelling moments. Some Jazz Ass Boer is a timely reminder that jazz is at its most vital when it is an instrument of protest.

EMERY/LOVANO/SILVANO/ GRESS FOURTH WORLD BETWEEN THE LINES 0255/EM 0180 CD

Joe Lovano deserves credit for thinking outside the box constructed for him by the jazz industry

and for progressively nudging the median part of its sanctioned mainstream, of which Fourth World is the latest and perhaps most portentous example. Although the set was penned by guitarist James Emery, this is a collective effort, evoking an organic feel corporate jazz is clueless about. Aply anchored by bassist Dave Gress, the quartet are equally cognate on numerous ballads and Brazilian-themed vehicles as they are on rollicking outboard tingles and jagged, stop-go motives. Gress' Emery's use of electric and acoustic instruments, Joe Lovano's arsenal of horns and percussion (he plays serviceable Paul Motian-like drums) and Judi Silvano's voice and flute, the quartet have a considerable palette, which is occasionally emphasized through overdubbing. Still, Fourth World has the vibe of a long hang in a loft or farmhouse, far away from the maddening industry.

GJERSTAD/STEVENS/BAILEY HELLO GOODBYE EMANCIP 4686 CD

Drummer John Stevens and alto saxophonist Frode Gjerstad enjoyed a nearly 15 year collaboration, whose centerpiece was Detail, an excellent whose bass chair was filled by Johnny Dyan and Kent Carter. Gjerstad's extrapolation of Dm7/Celestina's swarming phrases and shying total centres were compatible with Stevens' limber, concave pulse, an approach, arguably, as inspired by Billy Higgins as any New Thing drummer. The Norwegian saxophonist also shared Stevens' strong counterpointal streak, resulting in challenging improvisations. Their rapport is alternately supported and disrupted to rewarding ends by guitarist Derek Bailey on this 92 gig recording. Bailey reportedly uses large piercing chords, volume pedal-induced strains of sound and other tactics to allow access. Gjerstad's phrases and Stevens' quads patterns (which are beaded up by a standard jazz kit), creating a bracing tension. At other times, Bailey is swept up by Gjerstad's nimble lines and Stevens' fluid crossrhythms, adding sparse, almost growl phrases and jizzily strummed chords. If the measure of improvised music recordings is how musicians are continually shaped by each other and the moment, Hello Goodbye meets it head on.

GUY/CRISP/ELLYTON ODYSSEY INART 020 CD

Much has been made of pianist Marilyn Crispell's turn down the deep lyricism in recent years, including the compositions of bassist Barry Guy make greater demands on the aspect of her work than even Annette Peacock's. *Odyssey* confirms that Guy is a harder composer to peg, as he can effortlessly shift from the earnest folkish feel of the title piece to the turn of "Rags" without Peacock's long and lamenting. Crispell is also called on to extrapolate Guy's chants of such London Jazz Composers Orchestra chestnuts as "Hermos". Her performances are, in turn, magisterial and poignant, galvanizing Guy's often staggering

output and percussionist Paul Lytton's offsetting textures into a thoroughly absorbing tonal mosaic.

MARK HELIAS'S OPEN LOOSE NEW SCHOOL ENJA ENJA413 CD

On New School, the Open Loose ensemble places a greater emphasis on bassist and leader Mark Helias's quick-witted, improvisation-friendly extended compositions. Helias already implants perspective-shifting turns of phrase and structural twists into his tunes, which new tenor saxophonist Molo is very adept in exploiting in his solo. He tilts a bit more towards the post-John Coltrane trajectory than his predecessor, Elery Eskelin, but he is inventive and has a clear head on Helias's compositional aims and is obviously sparked by Helias and drummer Tom Ranney's quiet teamwork.

STEVE LEHMAN QUINTET STRUCTURAL FIRE CMP 345 CD

Saxophonist Steve Lehman's strong debut as a leader sets him apart from the other Wesleyan University affiliated saxophonists who have materialized through Anthony Braxton's recent ensembles. Lehman requires only a couple of tracks on *Structural Fire* to demonstrate a thorough distillation of Braxton's pre-Ghost France Music quartet material. The bulk of his programme, however, extends the outboard bpm-advanced advanced jazz articulated in the early 60s by another Lehman mentor, Jackie McLean. If the inspired play of veteran trumpeter Roy Campbell is any measure, Lehman's compositions and twining, diamond-hard alto lines have a tough-mindedness well beyond his twenty-something years. The sparks flying from the frontlines respectively ignite guitarist Ken Farnham, bassist John Hebert and drummer Kevin Norton, resulting in incendiary music.

WOODY SHAW LIVE VOLUME TWO HIGH NOTE 17088 CD

Any serious investigation of attempts in the TDS to make a genuine people's music of advanced jazz must deal with the late trumpet virtuoso Woody Shaw. Recorded at the apex of his tragically shortened career, this second volume of 1977 performances confirms Shaw's status as a paradigm-shifting virtuoso and a composer of breathtakingly demanding pieces that nevertheless left the listener with something to hum. Leading this firing-on-silencers sextet (trumpetist Steve Turre, saxophonist Curtis Jefferson, pianist Larry Willis, bassist Stafford James and drummer Victor Lewis), Shaw simply tears through the set's four tunes, not even slowing the pace for a potentially scintillating standard such as "What Is This Thing Called Love". The wonder of Shaw's brimmanship consists in its sheer muscularity; his sleek sense of thematic development and knack for delivering a knockout punch at the end of a solo remind you how he sad decline and demise predated the care of Wynton Marsalis. □

Modern Composition

Reviewed by Andy Hamilton

JOHN CAGN CREDO IN US... MORE WORKS FOR PERCUSSION

WINDY WINDMILL CD
The German label's esteemed Edmon John Cagne continues with a second offering from percussion group Outdoor Halls. They present some of Cagne's earliest pieces, including two of the Imaginary Landscapes, reckoned to have opened the era of electronic music. No 1, featuring two photographs, giving sinistral sounds, cymbals and piano, is one of his most haunting creations; the herts No 3 has echoes of Edgard Varèse's *Ionisation*. *Credo in US* from 1942 begins abstractly with an extract from a 'major' Romantic orchestral recording selected by the performers, and the contrast between recordings, rattling percussion and busy piano is hilarious, mists is almost environmental art – the sounds of water gurgling through shaken china shells and cracking fire, and eventually a trumpet blast. Five Cagne works with the unpredictability of the orchestra – sometimes well water gurgles when the cymbals, sometimes not. The title of *What About The Masses Of Crumpling Paper...*, from 1965, far ahead, non-sonant percussion, catches the commissioning letter Cagne received from the Art Foundation.

SYLVIE COURVOISIER & JACQUES DEMIERRE DEUX PIANO

INTAKT 064 CD
Intakt continues its exceptional standard of releases with the latest collaboration between two Swiss pianists who are longtime partners. Courvoisier is now resident in New York, and composes in both contemporary classical and jazz fields, working with Mark Feldman, Aeolian and Kuo Moy, while Demierre has mainly performed European repertoire. Their brief, often sparse disc pieces are abstract yet characterful, frequently using interior piano passages. A higher effect is owed for an *Ecône*, with its mace-like talking on plucked strings.

GILLES GOBEIL ... DANS LE SILENCE DE LA NUIT...

EMPIREMENTS DIGITALS MED166 CD
The world of electroacoustic composition is populated with composers, suggesting a degree of introversion, and it seems that Montreal-based Gilles Gobeil was one of them. *Dans Le Silence*... is a typically loosely structured IMED product. Often violent industrial and natural environmental textures are replete with sudden gestures of closure – a door slams, followed by atmospheric or recorded silence. Sounds tend to be non-repeating – no industrial astrate – and there's also a certain amount of spoken material, in French.

ROBERT HELPS NEW MUSIC FOR THE PIANO

CRH ARCHIVAL 674 CD
Given the wealth of material in the CRH series, this compilation of piano music performed by Robert Helps hardly looks essential. Meant to be

new in 1966, almost all the pieces date from the 50s. The 21 compositions reassembled – mostly American and aptown – fall into three predictable categories of serial, dissonant tonal and jazz, though Morton Gould's intriguing *Rock-Bell* mixes all of them. Ernest Bacon's *The Pig Won Run!* – evidently he had a sense of humour – starts off as like *Amoroso*; Robert Helps's own piece is unusual in its Stravinsky-like ecstatic shimmings. The big names are serialists Milton Babbitt, Mel Powell and George Perle, while Bill Overton, best known for orchestrating Monk at New York Town Hall, contributes a surprisingly un-jazzy *Polonaise No 1*. But few pieces last long enough to withstand the test of time.

ROBERT NORMANDEAU CLAIR DE TERRE

EMPIREMENTS DIGITALS MED107 CD
This is Normandeau's fourth disc for the Montreal label. Of the three compositions, two were originally intended for the theatre. *Clair de Mer* is the shakiest playing produced for Montreal, while *Envoies* is devoted from onomatopoeic poems by actors in Sophocles's *Elektra*. *Clair de Terre* is divided into 12 sections exploring elements of cinematography transposed to electroacoustics, but the results sound too easy and unconvincing.

JESSICA PAVONE & JACKSON MOORE SOLOS/DUOS

PEACOCK 02 CD
I was going to dismiss this wing, perplexing little recording, with a functional title, no sleeve information and no label address. Maybe *Upstairs* is the new *Beauty*, because the results are strongly compelling. The compositions – two by Pavone, two by Moore, all untitled – were recorded between 1990 and 2001. Privileged dominions, both acoustically (it was recorded in a small room on lo-fi equipment) and musically. Moore has a classical-sounding tone on sax, though ventures some turkey-gobbling scat-singing, and Pavone favours indeterminate pecking on violin. "2" is a study in glissandos for solo violin, while "3" progresses to scales. "4", for solo sax, is the most interesting. It's logically structured in motifs, often cutely reminiscent of Kurt Schwitters's *Unscored*.

LAWRENCE POWER WORKS FOR VOILA

HEARNOIA MUSIC HMR104 CD
The viola wasn't emancipated as a solo instrument till the 20th century but Lawrence Power now takes full advantage. The *Volant* is his early twenties and his recital, accompanied by Simon Cooper-Phillips on piano, is an ear-piercing *Niccolò Paganini* (1881-1944) was a Soviet avant-garde who Roushened before Stalinist repression, and his Scriabin-influenced *First Violin Sonata* from 1926 shows a gorgeous lyricism and expressive intensity. Lyricism is an evocative message from György Ligeti's edictic and haunting solo sonata from 1959. For a long time Ligeti liked only the bottom C string of the viola,

and the first movement covers the instrument's whole range on it. Power's interpretation stands with Tibor Zimenes's in the Sony Complete Edition, Teri Tenebris's *A Bird Came Down The Walk* from the previous year, is one of the controversial products of the composer's renunciation of modernism.

JEAN-GUIHEN QUEYRAS WORKS FOR CELLO

HARMONIA MUNICIPIAL 1100 CD
Three of the five great masters of modern Hungarian music are featured on this excellent disc. Sándor Veress (1907-92) was taught by Bela Bartók and Zoltán Kodály, and himself taught György Ligeti and György Kurtág. His unaccompanied solo sonata features beautiful 'light music' effects in its middle movement. Kodály's own *Sonata for Cello* (unaccompanied solo) is an explosive 20th-century classic. The most recent pieces are by György Kurtág, whose concert with Ligeti and Ferenc György – from Weber and Marcel Duchamp respectively – came together in the 1970s in his well-known piano piece *Játszó (Games)*. The series called *Jeux*, *Játszó* & *Quintet* (Signs, Games, And Message) for various combinations of strings is not so well known. Sex of its brief but striking solo pieces appear here.

ESA-PEKKA SALONEN LA VARIATIONS

SONY SKR114 CD
Following his earlier modernist style shared with Finnish contemporaries Magnus Lindberg and Kaija Saariaho, Esa-Pekka Salonen has turned to his American years to 'simple, clear-cut musical ideas', brilliantly orchestrated and with great rhythmic energy. But maybe there's too much of John Adams and not enough of Esa-Pekka Salonen in these pieces, brilliantly performed by The LA Philharmonic and London Sinfonietta. The bite piece, *Al Nanabans*, is colourful and spectacular, even suggesting a big band feel. Salonen doesn't readily split up the orchestra into chamber-like parts as do many contemporary composers, and its full resources are often brought to bear, with a prominent part for percussion and electronics. The song cycle, *Five Images After Sappho*, features Dana Upshaw with The London Sinfonietta, its pleasing pentatonic harmonies yielding at times a riot intensity. As they did with Saariaho, Sony have fired him up with a customer because scruffy composers produce useful music.

STEFANO SCODANIBBIO GEOGRAFIA AMOROSA

CD LEGNO WME006 CD
Following last year's *Six Duos* on New Albion, this album presents recordings of the composer's output for solo double bass from the last two decades. Scodanibbio, born 1956, has worked with Rohan De Sa, Markus Stockhausen and Terry Riley. He set *Stark* and *Due Pezzi Breve* into to help the instrument 'finally find its own voice, after having known only the stammering of voices inappropriate to it or the seductive violations of the so-called avant-garde'. These short pieces

are essentially melodic. Also, in contrast, is an *aria* suite in *Harmonics*, while it's hard to believe that the orchestral resources produced by the sensitive Murilo Barroso creates orchestral resources are produced by one player. The aesthetic is quite opposed to jazz virtuosity, but Scodanibbio imitates John Cage and embraces still

LISA WALKER GROOVED WHALE

EARTHHEAR 1033 CD
That classical violins are now prepared to do wet T-shirt shots on the beach is well known. Lisa Walker goes one step further and actually records her violin in underwater canyons – though she doesn't explain how here. *Grooved Whale* is the nickname of her beloved Humpback Whale, whose rare and early beautiful feeding calls have been field recorded and mixed into Walker's compositions. Unfortunately her settings were too close to New Age recording.

HUGH WOOD SYMPHONY/SCENES FROM COMUS

NMC 0070 CD
Hugh Wood, born in Lancashire in 1932, had a late but thorough schooling in Schoenberg's 12-tone method – he even studied with Andrew Lloyd Webber's dad and survived relatively unscathed. His serialism now makes him a conservative, but even when *Scenes From Comus*, based on Milton's 17th-century masque, appeared in 1965 it was hardly avant-garde. *Symphony*, premiered in 1962, is his mature orchestral statement. Its relative conservatism is irrelevant to the musical value of a turbulent, exciting masterpiece. Wood's love of quotation is hardly a concession to postmodernism, but to his personal access to the origins of a packed score for large orchestra. Maybe too profound for contemporary ears, you have to wonder how often it will be performed, making NMC's superb premiere recording by the BBCSO under Andrew Davis, all the more essential.

IANNIS XENAKIS WORKS FOR LARGE ORCHESTRA VOL I & II

EMPIREMENTS DIGITALS MED106 CD
"Why do Bach and Mozart repeat themselves all the time?" complained Xenakis. "I am sick and tired of the kind of music that does not move." He responded with some of the last century's most radical and visceral music. Though dating back to the 70s, many of the pieces on these discs are getting their premiere recording. That includes the remarkable, wild *Aix* which opens Vol I. Starting with an emphatic bass announcement, at first it seems there are two singers, but it's just baritone. Sayon Sakkas, an experienced Xenakis interpreter, who rises and swoops through the upper registers, is less inspired by the bloodcurdling cry of an Aegean species of seagull. *Jonah* on Vol I does feature melody, rhythm and scales, but as the composer once said, by accident. The Luxembourg Philharmonic may not have obvious avant-garde credentials, but it's galvanised by conductor Artur Lempereur. □

Outer Limits

Reviewed by Jim Haynes

ILLUSION OF SAFETY IN OPPOSITION TO OUR ACCELERATION

THE STAFF OF OUR CO

It begins pleasantly enough with the trilled chords from a dinner jazz pianist fractured by the quintessence of glitchy onsets with those from Stephen Mithieux or Einarsson Eliens. The history of Chicago's Illusion of Safety points to evidence that such surreal pleasures have been deliberately staged as a counterpart to something far more sinister. Sure enough, a disturbed ambience settles upon the rest of the album as the playful piano tones are replaced by razor sharp pings from a minutely glitched guitar coupled with psychoactively eerie drones and scribbles from a microphone across a metal plate. The genre of the album occurs during a collage punctuated by the Chinese water torture of a very slow leak dripping repetitively into a pool below, alongside a distant chant and canny atmospheric. While in *Illusion of Safety* is still attempting to actualize their same through a theatrical explosion of "the language of error".

THOMAS KÖNER DAIKAN

MILLE PLATEAUX MP107 CD

Silvart, lost in time Thomas Köner intended to "create a presence of sounds which do not refer to anything, and not only allow, but stimulate a complete awareness, free of damaged illusion". Yet his inclinations for monumentally calm ambience and deep subterranean rumblings still capture the barren Arctic references found on his *Nuvastok* Gorgias or even the nostalgic themes of Porter Rios. Whatever, Daikan is a masterful construction built upon the subtle changes made between serial patterns of invasively rushing synthetic weaves and bass tones which could be 500 knots signed down to a crawl. From within the grey tonal colours in mottled blacks and charcoal grays, Köner twice effectively announces three descending notes as a cathartic release from the album's black tension. Daikan is a suspended vision into a void of existential emptiness; it doesn't get much more dramatic than that.

ERIC LA CASA LES PIÈRES DU SEUIL 4-7

EDITION... 30 CD

While sound architects like Bernie Krause and Douglas Quin offer their stunning recordings of lower mankind or blasting Wesell seals with an earnest call for environmental preservation, Eric La Casa eschews such issues with a far more enigmatic form of electroacoustic poetry. *Les Pières Du Seuil 4-7*, La Casa transforms the primary source material of rain, wind and water through judicious editing, mostly from slow, seamless crossfades between massive amounts of recorded sounds. The resultant collages are thus not presented as true field recordings, but as exaggerations of the seemingly mundane properties of the elements. It begins violently with a thunderous crack of a hard rain pounding on a metal container, but settles down into a taxonomy of calming white noises including rain gently cascading over enclosed courtyards, water seeping through reverberating pipes and wind crackling through distant forests.

POINTS OF FRICTION SACKCLOTH AND ASHES

ANOMALOUS NORTON CD

Los Angeles based sonic obscurist Joseph Hammer has claimed that one of his primary musical influences was an episode of the 70s TV programme *Land Of The Giants*, in which the protagonists used tape loops to thwart alien tyrants. This topical piece of history neatly encapsulates the homebrewed explorations of consumer electronics, cheap instruments and general wilderness found in Hammer's work within *Points Of Friction* back in the early 80s. Skirting the fringes of the LA Free Music Society, POF emerged from a handful of art school misfits. *Sackcloth And Ashes*, originally released as a cassette in 1984 on Solid Eye, is undergirded by keyboards and primitive electronics, providing tonal roughness through sustained tones and simple minor chord progressions which could have been lifted from any number of Hollywood B movies and horror films. Lo-fi field recordings, guitar fuzz and pre-amped Moog amplifications of things like snapping shrimp and a diseased lung add a creepy, "mad scientist" aura to the basic electronics.

SPACE MACHINE COSMOS FROM DIODE LADDER FILTER

ALCHEMY AR135 CD

TANGERINE DREAM SYNDICATE III VIOLINS FOR III STOOGES

ALCHEMY AR145 CD

One of the most influential labels in Japan's underground noise scene, Alchemy have introduced their new "Inner Mind Music" series of cosmic tinged soundwork with the release of these two side projects from their current line-up of artists. It's possible that Takashi "Miso/Yamazaki" has stepped away from the slash 'h' bum power assaults found on his *Masenna* recordings. He's been resurrecting knob twiddling techniques from Cluster and Klaus Schulz with Christine 23 Orna and now the solo *Space Machine*. *Cosmos From Diode Ladder Filter* is Takashi's latest set of recordings which showcase his huge bank of modular synthesizers and analogue echo machines. Freely floating as an amorphous mass of pure plasma, these recordings vibrate and pulse through paranoid alarm call info, incandescent bleeding and leads of tipped off knob twiddling action. This is just as good if not better than Sonic Boom's actual electronics as EAR and Spectrum.

The lineage Dream Syndicate – starring Tommy, Johnny and DeDee Conrad – cross-reference a good chunk of vanguard music history from the 60s and 70s from gurgled minimalists to tough punk without breaking a sweat. Yet musically, the homage from these Japanese 'out' rockers is much closer to home, towards the *Isyegic* minimalism of the legendary *My Mantra* trinity. This too, which includes Overhang Party's Riny Fukuko and one of the seafarers from The Incapacities, steadily bow their voices, cellos and basses into an acoustic wash of sound with occasional deep vocal chirrings and accompanying electronics. Don't be thrown by the silliness of all of the references; this is a fine album of drifting improvisations.

THUIA GHOST PLANTS

EMPEROR JONES EMA4 CD


Thui is one of the many gurus employed by the Jewelled Arlier collective of Californian

psychoelectric improv. Where fellow US improvisors like No Neck Blues Band and Jackie D Motherfucker draw from America's diverse musical heritages, the Jewelled Arlier crew finds more resonance in English underground artists such as Shirley Collins, Eyles in Gas, Richard Young, Joviet/Face, and AMM. Comprising former Mica guitarist Steven H Smith and Glenn Ondaalson, as well as keyboard composer Loren Chase and pianist Rob Rejz, Thui is the most drug addled of all the Jewelled Arlier projects. Thui stretches out clustered notes from a broad palette of sounds (sustained harmonium, distant piano, crackled branches, bells dragged across the floor, a gentle guitar melody, etc) into continuously interwoven drones and amorphously organic passages. If you find the album too short (under 40 minutes), just play *Ghost Plants* again, as there are far too many coated details to capture in merely one listen.

TROUW TJUKRUUP (PART TWO: DRONES)

TRANSMIGRATION TR01 CD

German dronecore outfit Maeror Tri contextualize their sublimely hazy ambience with a number of psychological references: manifestos exploring a greater use of right-brain activity, demonstrations of multiple personality disorder and outward projections of hypnagogic activity. Yet these references in pathologies always held far more of a humane touch than that found in their industrial cousins like SPK, who bombarded their audience with autopsy footage to pronounce an eegles upon others' "cathedral of death". After Maeror Tri disbanded, two thirds of the group continued on as Trouw. With the inception of the *Tjukurup* trilogy, Trouw has returned to the previous interest in psychological tragedy. In most cases, invocations of dream imagery ('Trouw') is an archaic form of dream in German, 'Tjukurup' translates from the Australian Aboriginals as 'dreamtime' plants the author within the shiny happy world of New Age. This is not so for Trouw, whose dreams must be played by grim visages of shadowy archons, as their monumentally dark and surprisingly beautiful drones cast from post-Misty Valentine guitar reverberations do not equate with any sleep. ☐



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Holding court: King Crimson with Robert Fripp (seated)

IN THE COURT OF KING CRIMSON

SID SMITH

HELTER SKEETER PINK E14 99

BY JULIAN GOWLEY

"When I saw Crimson for the first time I felt myself somehow alienated," Sid Smith has been a devoted fan for 30 years, as he here confides to Robert Fripp, and now he is the authoritative historian of King Crimson. In *The Court Of King Crimson* is indispensable for anyone interested in the group or in the way rock musicians interact. What really impresses is Smith's even-handedness. Discussing the music he manages to steer clear of purely partisan evaluation, and the musicians emerge from his account as three-dimensional figures with complex personalities. Above all, he succeeds in writing the history of King Crimson, where a less capable writer might have settled for a biography of Fripp only. Obviously Fripp is central to Smith's account, but the guitarist's life is addressed to the extent that it coincides with the life of the group; other avenues such as Fripp's marriages and his work with Eno and Bowie are necessarily touched upon but the focus is held steady on the drama of King Crimson.

One of Fripp's tenets is that "music creates the musician". In practice this has meant King Crimson music shaping such radically diverse individuals as Greg Lake, James Murr and Adrian Belew in the course of its various incarnations. Smith doesn't reduce Fripp's centrality to a simple statement that Crimson is, after all, his group; rather he shows how Fripp, pragmatist as

much as idealist, has kept the channels open for the music to flow. As the account unfolds over and over, it's been a thorny business, a tale of conflict and profound frustration as well as enduring musical achievement. Smith is a dedicated fan but he doesn't conceal evidence that seems to support drummer Bill Bruford's suggestion that Fripp is "a difficult bugger".

A large part of the book's success rests upon Smith's scrupulous research. He has had access to musicians' diaries and interviewed them in person, so a rounded picture of key events emerges. Smith lets contradictory versions stand, with minimal commentary, and out of that clash of perspectives comes a tangible sense of King Crimson's internal dynamics over the years. Charlotte Bates, multi-instrumentalist Ian McDonald's partner at the time of the group's first incarnation, is allowed her view that bassist Greg Lake was "a great big ego, a big penis on legs", but more interesting than the also ample testimony that Lake's self-confidence and powerful voice were as crucial to the group's early success as Peter Sinfield's lyrics and light-show, a necessary component of that cautiously potent mix of disparate characters.

Fripp's total commitment to practice as a basis for his way of living (29 hours a day according to Bates) is traced back to his school days. Crimson's pre-history, like all subsequent phases, is illustrated with a large number of evocative black and white photos. Drummer Michael Giles is depicted at his kit back in 1960. Fripp and Gordon Haskell are shown doing the "Shadow Walk" with their group The League Of Gentlemen

in 1964. Giles, Giles & Fripp are seen trying hard to appear *any* Meanwhile, Smith registers the salient details.

When it comes to each album release, starting with *The Cheerful Insanity Of Giles, Giles & Fripp*, Smith provides a track by track breakdown. This proves highly effective because instead of focusing on his own response he includes the musicians' own recollections and observations plus relevant anecdotes, and this makes the survey consistent in tone with the rest of the history. Smith doesn't intrude; his comments are sparingly distributed and make sense (although some might question whether Fripp really was the New Wave's most original thinker). They are supplemented by well-chosen quotes from contemporary reviews of the records and concerts, notably by Melody Maker's Richard Williams.

Fripp's musical curiosity has often appeared to be King Crimson's driving force, but Smith makes it clear that he has by no means had a monopoly on such misadventures. Michael Giles regularly attended concerts by the Spontaneous Music Ensemble, some years before maverick percussionist James Murr entered the fold for the *Lark's* longues in *Aspic* phase. The success of those amazing freely improvised passages on the first album was underpinned by genuinely broad-based musical awareness. It's also made clear, on the other hand, that Peter Giles and (more bluntly) Gordon Haskell were baffled and distrustful of pianist Keith Tippett's invasive contributions to the group's early 70s recordings. Inclusion in the book of Ods Redding fan

Haskell's frank statements of distrust or distaste for King Crimson's music is a measure of Smith's determination to be fair to all parties, and makes for some entertaining asides.

Fripp makes some scathing observations but he is notably generous in his comments upon the musicianship of some of his collaborators. Virtuoso bassist Tony Levin, Ian McDonald and saxophonist Mel Collins receive fulsome praise, and given the guitarist's personal commitment to technique, it's salutary to be reminded of the way he encouraged Bo Diddley to take up bass, recognizing the singer's innate musicality despite his technical limitations.

The group that recorded in *The Court Of The Crimson King* (1968) and supported The Stones in Hyde Park is regarded throughout as a touchstone of Crimson magic. Members of that incarnation still regard it as special, a truly collective creative experience. Fripp remarks, "Everyone was involved. This is how a group works — if one person thinks of an idea, sooner or later someone will play it. The committed energy of the band generated some spectacular and audacious leaps into the unknown. Crimson didn't know what they couldn't do and went for it with gusto. Often." A lingering sense of what might have been had McDonald and Giles not chosen to depart haunts this account. But Smith leaves no doubt of the value of what has followed. He does so as a fan, reined in by the responsible historian's discipline. With full discography and brief survey of what the rest of characters is up to today, Smith has done the job definitively and made it highly readable. □

Ether Talk

Dispatches from the digital domain.

This month:

Touch's Ringtones CD highlights the mobile phone industry's lack of imagination. By Anne Hilde Neset

"Looks weird, sounds great." With the release of *Touch Ringtones*, Nokia's current advertising slogan for its new range of mobile phones takes on a new meaning. By "sounds great," their advertising gurus surely didn't have Farmer's Market's obnoxious creaks "it creaks, Bruce Gibbert's air and samples or kids. Matthew's crackly chirrup as he runs. No generation mobile technology allows the user to record a small sample of any sound on a memory chip, opening up the possibility for an infinite number of noises it could use to attract attention. Ringtones contains 99 suggested sounds for the purpose — tones and digital noises by the likes of Calvin Klein and Ryoji Kawai; sound effects such as a baby crying and Swedish actress Regina Lund's recording of a fly's orgasm; and whimsical absurdities like Dr. Guacarmole's "A Concise History Of Californian Rock Music In Under 5 Seconds" and London artists Gilbert & George's po-faced meta-dialogues: "How shall we spend the day, Gilbert? And now I like to see the falling of the light through the window," and "Why don't we go out and buy a new!"

"We sent out the brief to more or less everyone we'd worked with in recent years, and to various others whose address we had and whose work we respected," explains Touch's

Mike Harding, who put Ringtones together with partner Jon Wootton. "We asked them to submit a ringtone which they would like to hear on their mobile phone. Initially they were advised that it should be 10 seconds, and last up to four seconds, but some submissions ignored this," he explains. Some contributors last up to one minute, while Cologne's Thomas Brinkmann bypassed all restrictions by submitting a written table of digits which makes up his proposed ringtone. To hear it, you have to program it in yourself using the phone's "compose" function.

Harding's sleeveless uncovers the dark backdrop to the mobile phone industry's images of "trends resurited" and "life full of one to ones." In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it's estimated that two million lives have been claimed by the illegal mining of the mineral Coltan, a highly efficient electrical conductor used in computers and mobile phones. A UN report highlighting these tragedies is downloadable from the Touch Website (www.touch-demon.co.uk).

A recent survey reported that one mobile phone is stolen in the UK every minute, the thefts usually committed by under-16s. Even without the added complexities of criminal, health and political issues, there is a significant backlash simply against the intrusive effect of mobile phones into daily life and their effect on the

social environment. "Cell-yell" is a term coined in the USA for people who shout into their mobiles; and a Website, www.cellmarmies.com, has been set up solely for "promoting civility between phone users and the people around them".

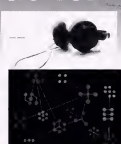
Phonebashing.com is a less divided version, set up by people who hate mobiles so much they take pleasure in bashing inconsiderate users and documenting their revenge attacks on the Web. "As you would expect, there were a handful of artists [we approached] who would have nothing to do with anything related to mobile phones," Harding admits.

Ringtones attempts to address these controversies, as well as to critique, in Harding's words, "the innately conservative attitudes of telecom companies — and users. The lack of imagination that is coupled with new technologies that claim the future to be theirs." Images, for example, spring on the train home and hearing, instead of a constrained ficelle of Right Of The Doublebeat, the cry of comorants and African fish eagles, howling wolves and hyenas, or the song of an Atlantic pelican, all courtesy of former Cabinet Minister and Chris Watson. When asked whether it's Touch's ambition down to transmute the commuter train experience into a sardonic symphony or an approximation of the African savannah, Harding soberly hopes people will

appreciate "the balance between the practical and the promotional. In other words, while it would be really amazing to hear baby gurflings, or bird noddies or Gilbert & George on a train journey, you wouldn't want to be in a carriage full of this nonsense!"

15 years ago the mobile was a yuppie toy (think Michael Douglas in Oliver Stone's *Wall Street*, standing on his empty beach with a plastic beach pressed against his ear). Mass production and marketing only kicked in over the last five years, and the phone now is one of the main conduits for communication, information and entertainment in the West, which will only increase with the emphasis on increased content-provision via WAP services. In a recent survey on mobiles commissioned by Motorola, cyberfeminist Sade Plant argues that, in countries like Afghanistan, whose landscape and infrastructure effectively prohibits the installation of telephone lines, it will be much easier to bring in telephone and the Internet via satellite. Soon, the mobile network will encircle the globe — but that doesn't help when it cannot cope with the most precarious of situations. Ringtones ends with the cold automated voice which greeted network callers on 11 September in New York: "All circuits are busy now, please try your call later." Ringtones is out now on Touch

Go To:



Make sure you have some time on your hands and all the plug-ins in the world before entering **Soundtoys** (www.soundtoys.net). This huge site, created by artist Stasza (www.stasza.co.uk), functions as an exhibition space and portal for artists to explore the paradigm of audio visual practice — that is, display online games which are at the forefront of programming methods. The site contains a long list of specially commissioned Net art projects to click on, many with an experimental Shockwave navigation system. The Links page will throw you into an ocean of sound and graphics and, when you feel visually and sonically overwhelmed, point yourself in front of the in-house journal providing a forum for debate around the creative use of new technologies.

One of the featured Soundtoys participants, New York based artist/interactive designer Hideoaki Minami, recently finalized **The Jetty**

(www.thejetty.org), punningly based on Chris Marker's influential short film *La Jetée*. The site is dedicated to retelling the chronological events of the film via still images that fade in and out according to the timeline accompanied with sentences from the film's voiceover. All is accompanied by the chilling *Blax* from an airplane on the Jetty Jetty, where the film was set, creating a poetic synopsis of one of the most intriguing futuristic visions film has produced.

Anyone interested in Visual Bennett aka People Like Us's current favorite "doo doos, la las and pom pom" should go to **Totallyradio** (www.totallyradio.com), a Brighton based Net radio station overseen by former XFM and mistress of the Totally Radio's daily show Clive Kember. The site also contains shows from Fat Cat and Leaf labels, interviews with artists like Jimi Tenor, Jah Wobble, Coleco, Lesser, Colin

Newman as well as The Wire's very own Ken Hollings reading from his new book *Destroy All Monsters*.

With the perplexing tagline "no one, everyone", **Directions in Collaborative Audio** (www.directionsincollaborativeaudio.org) starts up this month. Welcoming audio of all kinds, the site is an independent online community of musicians set up to facilitate collaborations across the globe. Each member submits a rhythmic or melodic 'seed' fitting the given brief (a tempo will be recommended). The community can then browse each other's submissions, post ideas, request input, and download the samples they want to work with. There comes the final effort of arranging and manipulating the material individually to a consistent track. The results will be made available as a streaming broadcast and future CD release. Go create **ANNE HILDE NESSET**



Miles high: Davis, with bassist Michael Henderson, circa *Dark Magus*, 1974

MILES TO GO: THE LOST YEARS, AN INTIMATE MEMOIR OF LIFE ON THE ROAD WITH MILES DAVIS 1973-1983

CHRIS MURPHY

THUNDERBOLT MOUTH PRESS PBK \$24.95

BY ANDY HAMILTON

Chris Murphy was an Irish-American guitarist who landed a job as roadie with Miles Davis in 1973, eventually taking over as his trusted road manager. He became devoted to his boss, in almost a father-son relationship — at one point Murphy lets drop the comment that he got more kindness from Miles than from his own father. But soon it was Miles, with his depression and lack of self-concern, who was the one who needed looking after. Miles went into years of dark depression after 1976, but Murphy was there for his triumphant return in 1981.

This is a much more positive picture of Davis the man than you get from many memoirs, even Miles: *The Autobiography*. In fact, Quincy Troupe's book genuinely puzzles Murphy: "The almost perverse delight Miles seemed to take... in presenting himself as a mean, sick jerk, added

by drugs, violence and debauched, is very strange to me". Though that's certainly a side to the book, in my recollection much of it is inspiring. And there's plenty of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll in Murphy's memoir of Miles in his darkest electric period. As the boss said: "You should be writing this shit down. Nobody would ever believe it!" In the acknowledgments Murphy candidly comments, "I have made every effort to remain accurate insofar as the chronology of events and concerts are concerned, but, as the narrative shows, we were high a lot of the time back then".

Murphy began as a rock 'n' roll guitarist, and his memoir has interesting insights on players who came into Miles's orbit, such as Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings and, most important of course, Hendrix. Murphy has no time for the older, mostly white jazz fans whose intellectual preconceptions prevented them appreciating Miles's new directions. In these ways Murphy has a lot in common with Paul Tingen, whose excellent *Miles Beyond* was reviewed recently in these pages — though I'd say that rather than leaving jazz behind, Miles expanded its concepts.

Murphy is offering a memoir, not a musical

analysis, but the book reflects his wide-ranging responsibilities. He has to stand in for Miles at a press conference in Japan, plotting the assembled hacks with "first-class honesty", as he describes it. He was also deputized to call up new group members. Miles would give him a name and phone number, and the reader from the chosen musician, often taking for a pittance in the wily ways of music, conformed to a pattern of incredulity. "Hello, my name is Chris Murphy, with the Miles Davis Band. Miles wants you to join the band." "No man, really, who is that?" "No kidding, I'm really calling for Miles." "Oh bullshit. Who is this? Is this Raibba?" This isn't funny, Raibba! The players during his time with Miles included Al Foster, Sonny Fortune, Dave Liebman, Pete Cosey, Mike Stern and John Scofield.

There's some interesting discussion of the mid-70s albums *Agharta* and *Pangea*. Recorded in Japan when Miles was already sick, they weren't released in the US and became underground classics. But according to Murphy, this poor treatment by Columbia contributed to Davis's emotional decline and disappearance from

playing. Murphy tried his best to drag Miles out of the torpor in his House of Usher-like townhouse, but to no avail. Eventually he took a job with *Weather Report* — a completely contrasting set-up which was much more controlled, less spontaneous than Davis's. (Apparently Jaco Pastorius introduced himself as "the world's greatest bass player" whenever he answered the phone.)

After Miles's comeback, things were done more professionally than before — which shows in the music too, far good and ill. The Prince of Darkness had no lower, even if his most-used phrase remained "Fuck you". Where before he'd been content to leave Mick Jagger waiting in a car outside his apartment, asking "What the fuck do I have to say to him?", he now greeted rock stars warmly. The so-called pop period is also more sober: after a slight stroke in 1982 Davis had to give up drinking and smoking completely. By the time of his final decline, Murphy was no longer working for him. But his memoir fills in some interesting gaps in our knowledge. It's attractively produced, with lots of pictures — an easy and enjoyable read. □

FRANK ZAPPA

CARL-LUDWIG REICHERT
DEUTSCHER TASCHENBUCH-VERLAG PBK €16

BY RICH WATSON

Most British music writers believe a shared language gives them privileged access to American culture, so Europeans can tell us little about rock. This misguided belief is amply illustrated by this gem of a book. Reichert names a story that has now been told at print many times, but nevertheless finds a host of intriguing facts and original points. The selection of photographs, many in colour, is excellent, avoiding the 'done to death' images, with unexpected bursts like shots of Frank Zappa's antagonists, John Wayne and Richard Nixon, plus

a photo of Zappa's family home when he was 15. Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag's "Portrait" series, of which this is the 151st, places Zappa in illustrious company (the list includes Sciascia, Gaddiano Bruno, Bach, Goethe and Freud — the only other rock stars are Hendrix and Lennon). Extra information (on topics as diverse as the Exotic label, Conwimer Smith, canine continuity and L Shonker) is placed under a red line on each page, and these are terrific, "off the lead" materials for further investigation (including a fantastic Eskimo bibliography and a list of mid-60s films with "Mondo" in the title).

In this study, Reichert has used Zappa as the occasion for developing a non-academic, critical,

"mass culture sifting" approach which takes Prose as seriously as Gay Debord. He is scornful of the contemporary style of Zappa as a cerebral jazz-rockster (only in Germany!), and emphasises his roots in dog-wag and gutter R&B. He is fascinating about the incident when revolutionary students disrupted a Mothers Of Invention concert in Berlin in 1968, appending an unpublished photo, and notes the brilliant Helmut Salinger, whose *Swinging Benjamin* made connections between freak rock and critical theory book in 1973. Reichert's words on the late 70s commodification of rock are fierce and biting.

There are few minor errors, but my only major complaint is that two paragraphs and a citation

from Wilhelm Reich from one of my own essays (in Richard Kostelanetz's *Zappa Companion*) have somehow lost their quotation marks in being translated into German and become part of Reichert's own resounding conclusion (though maybe this plagiarism could be interpreted as dialectical enlightenment...).

Reichert's hip aptness and rich vocabulary present difficulties for anyone whose German is rudimentary, but it's well worth the trouble. Where else would you discover that polo-neck sweaters could generate the phrase "das rollkragenpulloverige Getöse der Existentenbieten"? If Zappa were alive, he'd surely have found a place for that tortuous compound-adjective in a cabaret routine. □



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WIDE FORMAT

#048



On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, clubs in the flesh

Top left and right: Jaga Jazzist in Oslo. Bottom: Electrelse in London



PHOTOS: PAUL MORTENSEN (SAX), TULF PEROTTI (ELECTRELSE)

NO FESTIVAL OSLO BLA

NORWAY

BY ROB YOUNG

A few years ago, Norway's perceived contribution to the world of music consisted of nothing much more than overvalued jazz orchestras, pyrotechnic Black Metal bands and the Protestant purity of Jan Garbarek's God-bothering hymnals with The Hilliard Ensemble. But lately there have been more encouraging signs that the country's underground musicians are finding a special voice. Labels such as Rune Grammofon, Smalltown Supersound, Improv label Sola and the way outta leftfield likes of Ketil Ø Brandstad and Nasagi are drifting a seam of creativity that may yet match Norway's oil quotas.

Smalltown Supersound boss Joakim Haugland was the driving force behind December's two night, NO Festival at the city's Blå club. Boasting one of the finest sound systems in any small European club, Blå's warehouse ambience provides a roof for a large number of music and club mixes; and the regular NO nights, produced in collaboration with this magazine, have brought more international artists into Oslo than before.

But this event redressed the balance by bringing some of Norway's own talent into the capital.

Events kicked off with a laptop set by Alexander Ishaug, an electronics soloist, whose *Phonora* CD is just about to emerge on Smalltown. Paradoxically, his cerebral and conscientious use in concrete digital shows much with a number of similar projects sculpting raw and atonal noise, tones and percussive clicks (see anyone from Comas and Toshiyuki Nakamura and Philip Jeck all the way to John Zorn's *Hemlock Theatre* music), but this abstract and often percolating music is at its most visceral and engaging when pounding through a small club system.

Both Alog and Spunk, two Rune Grammofon regulars, make understated, intuitive and improvised music. The former couples technical prowess on the night with a closing duet that pits a bowed cymbal endurance test over tentative, pattering laptop pulses. Female chamber-improv foursome Spunk tend to direct their explorations of amplified and FX-treated horn, string instruments, percussive and whirled plastic tubing at each other rather than the gallery. Kim Høerthoy's abstract graphic designs

should be familiar to anyone who's ever seen a Rune Grammofon label sleeve, but his parallel career as an electronic musician is less well known. His *the 20* was a bundle of *Autocresh*, Aphex bubblers, and there's some of that tonight, but he brings the live appearance by opening with a drawing up accompanied by Spunk singing a falsetto love song, and closing with an insteady duo jam with Martin Høerthoy, the impressive drummer of Jaga Jazzist, who's the unquestionable highlight of NO.

Jaga Jazzist are a ten piece jazz fusion outfit, with none of the awfulness that description implies. Like some of the best big jazz groups of the early 70s, they demonstrate a genuine and freewheeling collectivity while keeping hips and minds on the funk. Høerthoy is an ostensible 'leader', though you get the feeling none of the group would accept such a denomination. But it's his sweet drenched contemplation of his drum kit, souped up with an MPC3000 percussion sampler, which inevitably holds the eye. The group's arsenal includes trumpets, trombone, electric guitar and bass, two bass clarinets, Fender Rhodes and vibraphone. Apparently they supported Tortoise when they

recently played in Oslo. While there are superficial similarities in approach, on the strength of the blowout it's hard to imagine the Chicagoans not being torn-eyed off stage. Lacking is around Høerthoy's magisterial bledgumness – several times he can't stop himself leaving to his feet like Erykah's storm concert in 09 – a group glide along any grooves never quite activating the jazz cruise control – there's little space for self satisfied soloing or wallowing. During the hour long set you're reminded of Talk Talk, Tied & Tied (Tie), Cinematic Orchestra, Sextant, Nucleus, Centipede and Isotope 217 and Kenny Wheeler's mid-70s ECM groups – a headlong clatter of chopping synopsized rhythms with homological migrations beating a flightpath overhead. Høerthoy is everywhere, occasionally standing up to batter home a rhythmic argument or deftly clambering around engineering beats without missing a pulse on the acoustic drums. And when Andrea Njes steps away from his vibraphone and buckles down to fleshing out the groove on an extra timbale set, you feel the building about to levitate. Who will save us from the fury of the Northerners? □

ELECTRELANE LONDON ARTS CAFE

BY LOUISE GRIMM

There's something awfully appropriate about the selections made by two DJs who are warming up this venue for *Electrolane*. X-Ray Spax, B-52s, The Sits and some grimey-reggae nostalgia – much of it, one suspects, recorded when the *Electrolane* quartet were mere babes in arms. The DJs – both women, incidentally – do little synchronized dances, half masked parties, half Ricki Lake's *Hairspray* triumph. These details matter because their weight of history, their articulation of a pervasive continuity is what drives *Electrolane*.

And at breakneck speed too. *Electrolane*'s instruments built by and large all begin slowly, with sustained chords from Verly Susan's keyboards and a few droplet notes from guitarist Mia

Clarke. This state of suspense is a stretchable condition – from seconds to what can seem like minutes – but the acceleration, when it comes, is expressible in nothing less than terms of G-force. On this evidence, the Brighton-based group has good reason to name their 2001 debut album *Rock It To The Moon*. A nod to drummer Emma Gaze and bassist Rachel Deiley, and 'The Invisible Dog', the opener to both album and the Arts Cafe gig, begins its ascent. Getting faster and faster (Gaze surely must be one of the hardest hitters around), the bar lines row a blur of kinetic energy. *Electrolane* deal with the problem of ending each piece in a pleasingly simple way; they just stop. It's an old punk tactic, but just as it was practised by such post masters as The Ramones or The Stooges, the sudden whoosh of silence is shocking, precious even.

The Arts Cafe – a small venue located in the

East End's Tynbee Hall – is, to take a line from psychogeographers such as Iain Sinclair and Peter Ackroyd, a place that resonates with a sense of subcultural change. Live artist Frankie B labours in blood in his studio directly below the venue. Only months before, Tynbee Hall's precincts were pooled by these in pursuit of Janet Cardiff's sound installations, or the traces of proudly evanescent socialists that the performance club Duple seeks to discover throughout London. In short, a most suitable venue for *Electrolane*, clear winners in pop's feminist awesomeness, a fate borne out by their audiences – a post-pot-head girl crowd maybe too young for the question-begging titles of *Electra* and *Echobelly*.

For a group whose name is, at present, often coupled with Le Tigre, NYC's finest electro-feminists, *Electrolane* can be surprisingly understated. No lyrics (or none audible, even on

tracks like 'Long Ours') mean that the content of their music has to be experienced in different ways. Their album may be, rather sweetly, dedicated to around 20 feminist icons (Aung San Suu Kyi to Miss Ticker, by way of Mike Dio, Joan Jett and Patti Smith), but the music conjures an somewhat less convulsive. Live, however, *Electrolane*'s sweeping synths and driving rhythms evoke something different again; the particular exuberance of the British shoreline, the out-of-season melancholy of holiday resorts emptied of daytrippers. Susan's licks, so well stratted out on a cheap organ, have all the resonance of a live sax soundtrack (see girls in knee-highs and vintage minis...) that's taken a new lease of life.

For all their focus, there's a pleasing rawness about *Electrolane*'s live velocity. Long may it last. As the shaker plastered across one of the group's Marshall amps reads: 'Girls Rock'. □

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Prize the Lord and pass the Pro Piaz: Keiji Haino's all-night flout

KEIJI HAINO TOKYO SHOWBOAT

JAPAN

BY BIBA KOFF

All night concerts are like parties during wartime. In a city the size of Tokyo, curfew conditions kick in once the last train's gone, keeping people off the streets until the public transport system is back up and running. Of course Tokyo has its perpetual daytime for daytrippers but, 20 minutes away from its Shinjuku hub, Keiji isn't one of them. Even most of the clipboards lining the alley leading to the Showboat's rock basement have shut up early for the New Year. With so few people in the vicinity an hour before its 1am start, I thought I was in the wrong place, until convinced otherwise by the bizarre apparition of a woman old enough to know better dragged up in Keiji Haino cut, fringe and long cape. Reassuringly, the sizeable mixed queue that has formed by the time the doors open aren't so fanatically attired. But the uniform black dress code and the atmosphere of subdued anticipation in the barely lit basement

say that nobody's expecting any concessions to the holiday season.

No roar greets Haino, trademark impenetrable shades firmly in place, when he slopes onto the small, barely raised stage, now darkened to a penumbral glow by dim blue and white spots, only to quickly disappear below the audience's sightlines. Falling to his knees, he strikes up a humming-like drone on a keyboard and holds it for an eternity until its lowering tone synaesthetically merges with the darkness. His night canvas now pinned pitchblack, he proceeds to chronograph the shadowplay of himself as one man orchestra. He cuts a lone, spectral figure as he sensually picks through a clutter of familiar and strange instruments pulled from his ever growing world collection. From the range of different projects, collaborations and ad-hoc Improv encounters he's participated in these past dozen years, it's clear that he's more than capable of squeezing his essence, Ahmad-like, from anything that'll make a noise. But this is only his second night out as a one man ark, apparently. He makes it

very quickly evident that he has no special interest in displaying any virtuosity as a multi-instrumentalist. Rather, he appears to have racked them up against himself as a challenge to any habit-forming practices he might have fallen into on his usual instruments.

Armed with samplers and pedals, he deftly loops and layers sounds plucked, blown, beaten or scraped from a chosen instrument. Like a potter moulding rings of clay, he responds to the individual densities and textures of the sound materials at his fingertips to shape each individual piece. Most astonishing are the weirdly ectoplasmic figures constructed from Haino's sampler-assisted phonetic stutters and voice-breaths, and built into a disembodied chorus that fills the room. Watching him painstakingly whip up voodoo storms of percussion from various seemingly ill-fitting and sometimes awkwardly syncopated patterns, you begin to understand why he decided not to replace Fushitsusha's departed drummer. Constantly shifting the musical ground he's walking on, Haino rends the night with wild reed shrieks,

piercing whistles, belching, conchlike noise, string drones. For the most part, his guitar is left untouched, except as a tool for laying down some jazz-amped loops which he briefly seizes over. The nature of what he's doing imposes an episodic structure — simple, nurtured, blossom — on the effort, but each blooming moment is bursting with different details; and when, towards the end, Haino sends up a shimmering squadron of glowworm notes from a shouldered harp, people are no longer sure whether it's him or them who's died and gone to heaven.

And all of a sudden, with a brief "Domo arigato", he's gone. Unbelievably, he has played for almost five hours without a break or any idle audience banter. While it was happening, there were moments when it felt like it would never end, but now it's over, the night feels like it passed in an instant. Yet long after the sun's come up, the night's music continues to haunt the alternately wired and elated state you're left in by sleep deprivation, and you realise how most of Haino's work occupies that instant-ecstasy between waking and dreaming. □

On Location



Michael Gira (right) with Angels Of Light

ANGELS OF LIGHT FEATURING MICHAEL GIRA + CALLA NEW YORK BOWERY BALLROOM USA

BY DAN JONES

For Brooklyn group Calla, who have been taken under the wing of Michael Gira's Young God label, minimalism is the watchword. Not a note is wasted during their end of year support slot at New York's Bowery Ballroom. Every simple melody or chain rattie sample goes towards creating the melancholy mood that engulfs the group's songs. The three piece created atmosphere with just a few ingredients, an edgy guitar, dancy metal on metal samples and cooing bliss and drums. Sometimes, Gira's velvet whispered vocals, Ennio Morricone-style guitar twangs, and drummer Wayne B. Majors' never singing samples bring to mind Pynchon working their way through Neil Young's Dead Man soundtrack.

Live, a track like "Fear Of Fireflies," from the recent *Scavenger's album*, could pass for a pop song, albeit one heard down a dark alley, propelled by a cyclical bassline, simple guitar

strums and silky percussion. However, Calla also deal in atmospheric dynamics. The set opener, "The Swims," builds from simple strumming into a childhood scope on steroids, leavened with layers of reverb-soaked feedback. Frontman Velle is the quiet eye of the storm. His resolutely low-key delivery gives the impression that you are eavesdropping on a private conversation.

Calla's sound often splits the difference between sample-heavy Ambient and guitar-driven alternative rock. The group frequently base songs around metallic samples that might have been recorded in a scrapyard, and these found sounds are overlaid with plangent guitar plucking. Calla's roots show tonight with a cover of Can's "Mother Sky" (a tribute to the recently deceased Michael Karoli?), a looping mantra inflected with fuzz guitar and heartstrapping tape loop vocals — and a new song with a bassline that winks at The Beatles, "Awake And Under," from their self-titled first album on Sub Rosa, is the most stirring moment in the set. The recorded version is a slender lullaby. Live, the track is shot through with deep church organ bass and treble-soaked guitar, a thick sound that hits through the gut and hangs in the air even after they stop playing

Where Calla are reserved, former Swans frontman Michael Gira has become quite the opposite, in a dark and Gothic fashion, naturally. At one point during the show, he claims to have slept with every member of his current outfit, Angels Of Light during the course of the tour. Looking like an escaped from a Flannery O'Connor novel, what with his severe buzz cut and film noir suit, Gira leads his Angels through a set that sounds like the final flowering of 60s chamber death pop. Using instruments such as bees, vibes and acoustic guitar, the group lay down a lush bed of sound to accompany Gira's deep-throated murmurings.

Gira, the only permanent member of The Angels Of Light, concentrates on songs from the *How I Loved You* album and a selection of recent unrecorded tunes. Often the tracks bring to mind Los Rovers's Berlin, Los Huidobros, Leonard Cohen or newer acts like Lambchop or Tiedarkness. Nevertheless, Gira's music has not entirely lost its abrasive edges. The group lack up a mass of sound in a new song called "All Souls Rising" and keeps up the dense factor in "Nations," another stand-out track that has yet to be recorded. Generally, however, the Angels go for

a pure acoustic sound live — one that relies less on feedback and echo and more on strum and drum dynamics and lighter-than-air vibrato for its sonic charge.

Typically, Gira's songs intermingle his own confessions with the stories of the losers, boozers and users he encounters in the cities he travels through, whether that be "Rise Of Los Angeles" or "New York City Girls." These days, however, there is a more dissonant element of black humor and self-parody in his work. "I hate you for your love, and I hate you for your sex," he sings to the audience during "My Suicide." Gira's vocals are mused loud, and, like the man himself, his dark chocolate croon comes off as both ludicrous and lugubrious on stage. In a club setting, his voice takes on new dimensions, one minute heaving the crowd like an old time preacher, and whispering sweet and sour nothings in its ear the next. This balancing act between Gira's past as an astute nosebreaker and the lighter, more featured stylings of the Angels Of Light is perfectly illustrated at the end of the show as, belted in blue light, Gira formally — almost primly — snips all the strings off his acoustic guitar. ☐

CORNELIUS CARDEW DAY LONDON CONWAY HALL UK

BY PHILIP CLARK

Prior to this retrospective day of Cornelius Cardew's music, former Fluxus/NOVA composer Frederic Rzewski observed to me that Cardew could spot another composer's weaknesses at a hundred paces, but had an absolute blind spot when it came to his own. That sentence resonated in my mind throughout this long afternoon. The considerable highs of AMM's delicately cooing set and Rzewski's own towering performance of the epic solo piano work *We Sing For The Future* sat awkwardly next to pieces whose strength of purpose and concept died with the political dogma that fed them.

Things got off to a tedious start with Paragraph VI of *The Great Learning* performed by surviving members of the Scratch Orchestra. As to the purpose and concept of this work, the audience were left in the dark. Isolated squeals from both Michael Parsons' one fingered piano and a decidedly creaky fiddle were met with doodles

from jangling toy percussion instruments. From a purely musical point of view, the performance was too compartmental to be interestingly arbitrary, but too random for that subconsciously to bear creative fruit. Half the ensemble left the stage a few minutes before the end to not particularly effect, and I was neither provoked nor irritated in a motivating way. It was a performance for the benefit of those on the stage, and deathly dull for anyone else.

The second set opened with John Tibbary's tender performances of the folky piano pieces *The Cobby Boy* and *Father Murphy*, and his last reading of February Pieces, described by Cardew as a "compendium of avant garde piano techniques". Tibbary exudes a warm and unfeigned authority and watching him play is always an absorbing experience. As February Pieces came to an end, AMM members Eddie Prevost and Keith Rowe arrived on stage and the performance moved seamlessly into a realisation of The Tiger's Mind. Tibbary's lines became softer and more delicate than the piano normally allows, his melodic shapes weaving

feldmanesque charm. Prevost was more forceful as isolated symbol and skin gestures evolved into longer paragraphs, and Rowe acted as an arbitrator and punctuated the performance with a selection of carefully honed comments and full-stop remarks that gave the long structure momentum.

Tibbary, Rowe and Prevost are like three beautifully oiled cogs in an ever evolving machine, and the fact they had independence from Cardew has allowed their work to define its own relevance. But after that questionable performance by "former members" of The Scratch Orchestra, the remaining associates of People's Liberation Music seemed even more anachronistic. This group was Cardew's experiment in fusing a jazz/rock fusion language with political tub-thumping. In its heyday the PLM performed at rallies and demonstrations, but 30 years on and in a concert situation the material was too curiously embarrassing. A drummer of cortical incompetence anchored riffs that sounded like rock Wakenham's cast-offs. Singers Yoko Shiba and Chris Thompson beamed as they delivered the most excruciating of

political doggerel with the worst sort of amateur's self-confidence. Naturally there was no sense of postmodern irony, which is a shame because this was pure Mel Brooks or Harry Hill. It takes a very special lack of critical judgment to perform this music today as if we were still in the 1970s — People's Liberation Music needs a leader.

Frederic Rzewski's performance of *We Sing For The Future* was as very and powerful as his new recording of the work (reviewed on page 68). He made sympathetic use of the aesthetic contradictions Cardew's music presents and did so with poise and of enervating control and sobriety. Likewise, John White, Hugh Shrapnell and Christopher Hobbs of the Promenade Theatre Orchestra had the wisdom to acknowledge in the programme notes that their performance of *Octet '61* was a tribute to Cardew, rather than a demonstration of their recent developments. As such it worked fine, but all the performances by "former members" highlighted how even music that aims to remove itself from the tradition is not immune from building its own reputation of empty postcodes and clichés. ☐



Cheer Kokoro land: Michiyo Yagi and Akkazu Nakamura

KOKORO LONDON QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL/SPITZ

UK

BY CLIVE BELL

Akkazu Nakamura was a 20-year-old King Crimson fan when he first heard the shakuhachi on Tony Levin's November Steps. Inspired to take up the Japanese flute, he went straight to the top man for lessons, embarking on a 15-year apprenticeship with Kaksaku Yokoyama. During this time he studied at Boston's Berklee College of Music, and pushed the shakuhachi out into jazz and rock, even playing with John Coltrane's drummer, Elvin Jones. Last autumn I gave an enthusiastic welcome to Nakamura's solo album of classical shakuhachi pieces (*The Wire* 211), on which he played with a focused ferocity not heard since the death of Zen master Wozumudo.

In December Nakamura brought his trio Kokoro to the UK for a short tour. Of the two koto players, Michiyo Yagi is familiar from Otomo Yoshihide's *Japanezima* tour and Haco's off-the-wall pop trio Roashiro. The other koto is played by Miki Maruta. At the QEH the trio collaborated with The Orchestra Of The Age Of Enlightenment,

one of the UK's leading period instrument ensembles. Strings only for this show, The OAE stand up to play, grouped in a horseshoe around the discreet power chords of the theorbo, a lute with an unfeasibly long neck. The gut strings of the period violins and cellos make a wonderful creamy sound on the 17th-century repertoire, leading us through the harmonic intricacies of Purcell and William Loeves. Matthew Lucie's shifts of harmonic direction are full of enjoyable airtight girly ambiguity.

Kokoro present their own 17th-century Japanese piece, *Chidori*, all linear melodies and no harmonies at all. But there are points of contact with the English music: both have a sophisticated formality and unadorned plainness, and neither is particularly concerned with rhythm. Then Nakamura performs an ancient solo piece, *Sage*. This is a storming technical display of wild breath sounds and circular breathing, though underlying the pyrotechnics is a meditative calm. The audience receive it with great enthusiasm.

It might be kinder to draw a veil over the contemporary part of the programme. *Re Kikunura's* *Re The Cherry Blossom* is a double concerto for shakuhachi and waka that mimes

queasy harmonic meanderings with treacly sentimentality. Michael Berkeley's specially commissioned *Glass Tears* burses the Japanese instruments in a breathless rush of activity, which starts to achieve some clarity only in the last two minutes. It's like glimpsing a monk caught up in the rush hour.

Three days later Kokoro have their own showcase at the Spitz club in East London. There are five kotos on stage, looking like breaking waves, and at one point Michiyo Yagi mimics swimming through them. Kokoro write *Avant garde Japanese Ito* on their posters, but it's an evening of cross-cultural confusion and head-scratching for many of the audience. To present one King Crimson tune arranged for kotos and shakuhachi seems like a neat novelty idea. But to play a whole evening of the stuff — plus Bowie and Eno's "Warsaw", Pink Floyd's "One Of These Days", Hendrix's "Purple Haze" — surely this is kitsch? But at no point do the group acknowledge that their enterprise might be odd in any way. "Bowie heard his tune on our Website and ordered our CD," confesses Nakamura. We wait for the punchline, but there isn't one. It's just, you know, great that Bowie did that. So bring on a Bowie inflatable doll and best the

koto with it? No, that's another gig entirely.

Now, I know the guy who did those panpipe Top 20 covers, versions of Spandau Ballet and Duran Duran for panpipe and string synth. At least he had the grace to be embarrassed about his success (he used a pseudonym), and as a panpipe player you have to be responsive to your audience's requirements to some extent. But Kokoro seem to aspire to that noble of music, aspire to play supermarket music with straight faces. Nakamura's own compositions place melodies that drip sentiment over the harmonic sensibility of bad jazz, supported by a koto orchestra in seven time. Presumably Berkeley teaches you to write like this. And Nakamura's intervention goes awry when he plays in these Western scales, the refinement of his traditional playing deserting him entirely. If you're determined to suck, at least do it in time.

The dead hand of the rock guitar solo lays across this music, a belt disguised as shakuhachi improvisation. In fact Kokoro are a Prog rock group in sheep's clothing — Nakamura still daps King Crimson, and the fact that he's working with Japanese traditional instruments is in no way going to stop him paying respect to that music. □

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Compiled by Phil England



Brigitte Fontaine, Ekkehard Ehlers



UK Festivals

DEEBEAT WEEKENDER

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Hip-hop-dominated Big Beat weekend, with Doug E Fresh, Blackalicious, The Herbaliser, Souls Of Mischief, 4 Hero, People Under The Stars, Poets Of Rhythm, Othello, Plaid, Richard O James, Luke Vibert and more. Caister Vauxhall Holiday Park, 22-24 February, £89 (includes chalet accommodation), 0870 1611 626, www.deebeat.net

PULSE

LONDON
Concert series celebrating the work of contemporary black jazz artists. The series starts with trumpeter Claude Despas directing The African Jazz Ensemble at Stairs (B), the esteemed Kerry Barron, Ben Carter & Billy Cobham trio explore the limits of extemporisation in a set of standards and originals (22), and singer Cleveland Watkiss celebrates the release of his new album with his All Star Big Band (25). The series continues in March with vocalist Oana Rooves revisiting the work of Sarah Vaughan (31), and an appearance by The Master Drummers Of Africa featuring percussionists from 15 countries (31), and concludes in April with Tony Kofi And The Afro-Funk Family (1). London Royal Festival Hall, times and prices vary, 020 7960 4203

RPM MOJO 100

LONDON
The British music magazine's centenary issue concert series continues this month with Stereobop and Brigitte Fontaine (1), Hugh Lloraine and Sirman (2), Marc Ribot solo (3) and Elliott Smith & Orchestra (6). London Royal Festival Hall, 020 7960 4242, www.rfh.org.uk

International Festivals

ACTIVATING THE MEDIUM

USA
Performance, installation work, multimedia initiatives and interactive technologies collide at this West Coast digital art event, featuring contributions from Sorsorband, Alau Tanaka, Zbigniew Karłowicz and others. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 15-24 February, 001 415 357 4000, www.sfmoma.org

FREQUENCIES (HZ)

GERMANY
Major exhibition and performance series exploring sound, light and perception. The exhibition includes compositions by Pan Sonic's Misa Wieros and Franz Ponnas, politically and socially relevant works by Ulmer and Formers Manual, Mark Bae exploring the limits of hearing, a large-scale light projection by Olaf Von Hausdorff, and a site-specific multimedia installation by Gaston Nicot. Alongside the exhibition, Nicola has curated an extensive performance series which covers the gamut of new electronic music and concentrates on innovative combinations of sound and image. The full listing for the performance series is as follows: Cyclo, Russell Hensel (8 February), Pan Sonic, Aka Nole and Formers Manual (9), Ryoji Ikeda, Carl Michael Von Hausdorff and Franz Ponnas (10), Pits, Erasmith and Frank Bretschneider (15), and Thomas Köner with Jürgen Reibe (16). Festivals, Objekte und Goodplay (22), Morolake, Random Inc. and Ekkehard Ehlers (23), Markus Schmickler, Steinhilber and Onlab and Richard Chartier (28), Mark (Masami Akita/Zbigniew Karłowicz), Florian

Hocker and COH (2 March), Deinformacion, Marc Behrens and Achim Wollschlaeger (5), Onyiahle Chis, Stephan Mathieu and Sinking (8) and Ultra-red (April), etc. A catalogue accompanies the exhibition, with a CD including work by all the artists represented in the show. Frankfurt Schirn Kunsthalle, 9 February-29 April, 00 49 6929 98820, www.schirn.de

(K-RAA-KIS)

BELGIUM
One day festival from this enterprising label featuring Ekkehard Ehlers & Joseph Suchy, David Grubbs, Mael, Oren Ambarchi, Vibacathedral Orchestre, Wlo, Twine, Benjamin Franklin, it & My Computer, Aarg, Toss and Twenty Six, Hasselt Zaal Belgie, 2 March, 00 32 11 224161, www.kraak.net

PERFORMANCE POETRY FESTIVAL

ISRAEL
15 Israeli sound poets present works by Kurt Schwitters, Allen Lucier, John Cage, Gertrude Stein, William Burroughs as well as their own works using performance, vocal artistry and video. Jerusalem Hazin Performance Art, 21-24 February, 00 972 6725419/20, thawitmain.squidnet.co.il

THE VISIONS OF ARNOLD

SCHÖENBERG
GERMANY
Concert series complemented by a showing of 150 of the Viennese composer's little-known expressionist paintings as well as a screening of films featuring his music. Performances are by Ensemble Modern and others, and the films include Ken Russell's *Dante's Inferno* and Jean-Luc Godard's *Nicolas Vague*. Frankfurt Schirn Kunsthalle, 15 February-29 April, 00 49 6929 98820, www.schirn.de

WAVELENGTH 100

CANADA
Toronto's weekly alternative music night celebrates its second birthday with this three day event. Featuring Detention (Sam Shalabi/Alex MacSwain), Gesundshot (members of Oo Make Say Think), Kopley, Skyways, Raising The Fawn, Full White Oreg, Resisters, Michelle McAdams & Eric Chénau, I Am Robot And Proud, Blackeyes, Drummer, The Creeping Nobodies and more to be announced. Toronto Clinton's Taverns, 8-10 February 9pm, pay what you can afford, 001 416 533 4515, www.wavelengthtoronto.com

Special Events

CAPTAIN BEEFHEART PROJECT

USA
US premiere of Fast 'N' Bulbous, the seven-piece Captain Beefheart instrumental tribute group featuring Gary Lucas, arranged and conducted by Phillip Johnston plus live Beefheart video footage from all phases of his career. The group will also lend musical support to Wire writer Mike Barnes, who crosses the Atlantic to read from his Beefheart biography. New York Knitting Factory, 9 February, 9pm, \$15, 001 212 219 3008, www.knittingfactory.com

BEYOND FREE LOVE

UK
UMC's annual free party with live music in two halls from improvisers and sonic square pegs Alan Wikman & Steve Noble, Gail Beard & Phil Durrant, Paul Hood, Dennis Dubocovich, Modulus, Noise Flaminio, Rob Aston and others. London Conway Hall, 15 February, 7pm, free, 020 7242 8043, www.m-c.org.uk

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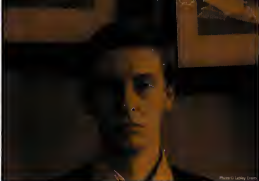


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BANNED
UK**

Packed multi-arts evening where improvised music meets stand-up comedy, performance art and installation. Featuring such improbably named acts as Chocolate Sandwich, Harry Butler Orchestra, Frank Caracoregic, Bob McGibbon, Ralf & Nulu, Christophe Amos and Red Menster. London Rye's Wine Bar, 7 February, 8.30pm, £3, www.limitedhouse.co.uk

ALAM VEGA: COLLISION ORIVE

USA
An exhibition of the Suicide vocalist's extraordinary neon junk sculptures, his first art show in 20 years, complemented by a gallery performance by the Suicide duo of Iggy and Marty Rose (22 February). New York Jeffrey Deitch Gallery, to 1 March, 001 212 343 7300

**LA MONTE YOUNG &
MARIAN ZAZEELA
USA**

Ongoing sound and light environment from the ultra-minimalist composer and the light-artist partner. New York MELA Foundation, to 22 June, Thursdays and Sundays from 2pm-midnight, \$4 contribution, 001 212 925 8270, www.melafoundation.org

On Stage

**BIRMINGHAM CONTEMPORARY
MUSIC GROUP**

The BCMG's programme of work includes the premiere of Mark Anthony Turnage's 45 minute work *Bass* inventions written for the great jazz bassist Dave Holland, as well as a new work by Gerald Barry. Birmingham CSD Centre (2), London Barbican (3), Beeston The Anvil (5), Cambridge Co Exchange (6) and Brighton Co Exchange (7)

**MICHAEL BRECKER LARGE
ENSEMBLE**

The saxophonist's saxophonist, Brecker tours with arranger and multi-instrumentalist Gil Goldstein and ten other leading jazz musicians from the UK and the USA. A CMR tour co-sponsored by The Wire. London Queen Elizabeth Hall (25 February), Cambridge Co Exchange (26 February), Beeston The Anvil (27), Durham Gale Theatre (28), Birmingham Symphony Hall (1 March), www.cmr-tours.org.uk

URI CAINE ENSEMBLE:

MAHLER REIMAGINED
Playful reinterpretation – partly affectionate, partly inventive – of Gustav Mahler by pianist Caine and his group. London Purcell Room, 9 February, 7.30pm, £12-50, 020 7980 4242, www.urff.org.uk

CENTROZOOM

Aki Markus Reuter and Bernhard Westheintz, two German musicians using processed touch guitar plus rhythmic modulations. Tyne & Wear Buddie Arts Centre (23 February), Earls Precincts (26), www.dn.org.uk

OLATOPE PEOPLES

Fresh from the release of their second album *Expansion Team*, UK's HipHop maestros return to the UK for a series of live dates. Manchester Hip & Grape (4 February), Brighton Concord (5), Bristol Thekla (7), London Astoria (9), NME Beats Show supporting Bubba Sparox, Glasgow King Tuts (11)

OURUTTI COLUMN

Vinny Reilly's guitar gently weeps. London Jazz Cafe, 18 February, 020 7916 6060

ROGER ENO & FRIENOS

Brian's sibling performs a rare concert in celebration of a new album release on the online label Burning Shed. Also appearing are Robin's Mark Beazley, No-Mat's Tim Bowness with pianist Peter Chilvers, and German electronic group Centrozon. March Assembly House, 28 February, £7.50, 01603 660352, www.burningshed.com

FAIRPORT CONVENTION

Legendary English folkies celebrate their 35th anniversary with Wilton, Carly and Vicki Clayton providing support. London Royal Festival Hall, 7 February, 020 7960 4242, www.rfh.org.uk

FARQA & IRAQI MAQAM ENSEMBLE

Outstanding Iraqi vocalist and her group perform music from the most difficult genre within the Iraqi song tradition. Belfast An Culturalant, 7 February, Bpm, £8/£5, 028 9024 8818, www.movingonmusic.co.uk

FOUR

CD launch gig for the upcoming quartet of Larry Stobbs, Howard Riley, Kerry Wynn and Mark Sanders. London St Cyprian's Church, 9

February, 7.45pm, £7, 020 7258 0724

**FRAKTURE BIG BANO WITH
EVAN PARKER**

Improvised saxophone Evan Parker features as soloist in a new composition, *The Chace Concerto* by Phil Huggins. The piece was written for Evan and the large improvising RBB, which also features guests Caroline Keadon on saxophone and John Edwards on bass. Liverpool Bluecoat Arts Centre, 18 February, Bpm, £5/£4, 0151 709 5297, www.teklum.reserve.co.uk

FRIDGE

Sub-zero space rock. Cork Tiskel Arts Center (26 February), Dublin Shelter at Vicar St (1 March with Jimmy Behan), Belfast Auntie Annes (3), Glasgow King Tuts (4, with Capitol K), Manchester Roadhouse (5, with Capitol K), London Scala (6, with Capitol K and Mantoba), Bristol Louisiana (7, with Capitol K and Mantoba), www.breanwashed.com/fridge

FO BATMAN

Impresario maverick with a Gads sensibility, Hugh MacLellan, with group, embarks on a two-date tour to coincide with the release of oh oh Ah on his revived Winkler Zounds label. Hugh describes the group's music as "Mercurialistic Balmatic Free Rock". Lancaster Yorkshire House Pub (23 with The Collectible Jennifer), Sheffield The Grapes (24, with Mick Beck)

NICK HARPER

The son of legendary folk rocker Roy plays a Valentine's Day special. London Spitz, 14 February, Bpm, £8, 020 7392 3032, www.spitz.co.uk

INSTANT MUSIC MEETING: OIALOGUE

International multimedia improvisation meeting with UK debuts from No-Neck Blues Band members Iain Shirashi on sax and Michiko Takahashi on percussion. Sarin based saxophone and stringer player Thomas Andersen, Kyoto based Budo dancer Kan Mai,

Out There

UK pianist Steve Beresford, Shugito Wada on computer, and scopic preening live video. London, October 6/7, 23 February, 7-30pm, £7/£5, 020 7831 1618

BRIAN IRVINE ENSEMBLE

Selkirk's 13-piece rattle through deconstructions of standards, haku settings of four Celtic poems, mechanical music and reflections on a skipping Aunt Pazzola CD, among other things. Features English saxophonist Paul Dunnell as the group's guest soloist. Glasgow The Arches (10), Newcastle Upon Tyne The Cluny (11), Leeds The Warehouse (12), Nottingham Dining Theatre (13), Lakeside Arts Centre (14), Birmingham Midlands Arts Centre (16), Kendal Brewery Arts Centre (17)

JOAN JEANRENAUD:

METAMORPHOSIS

Ex-Kronos Quartet collect tours with a multimedia programme which includes collaborations with five video artists. Works include an arrangement of Philip Glass's piano piece *Metamorphosis* alongside newly commissioned works from Tokyo Ono, Karen Tanaka, Haruka El Gin and Steve Mackey. A CDN tour co-sponsored by The Wire. Brecknell South Hill Park Arts Centre (25 February), Brighton Dome (27), London Queen Elizabeth Hall (1 March), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (3), www.cventryarts.org.uk

KDPIKINS & KONIKIEWICZ

Hemplock's a go-go. Easter Phoenix, 24 February, 8pm, £8/£4, 01392 667080

MISHA MENDELBERG

The Dutch Dutch piano absurdist plays a solo set supported by fellow ivory coasters Guss Janssen and Brian Kellock. Glasgow PCA, 16 February, 8pm, £8.50, 0141 352 4900

OSZMATI

LA's monstrous Lady/HipHop super crew. London

Royal Festival Hall, 8 February, £15/£12.50, 020 7960 4242, www.rfh.org.uk

PANDAEUMONIUM

The unmissable improvising quartet of Alex Ward, Pat Thomas, Steve Noble and John Edwards. Reading Rising Sun Arts Centre, 1 February, 5pm, £5, 0118 986 6788

FRANK PERRY

Pre-recorded Perry explores Tibetan rhyning bowls in a performance titled *The Ancient Power of Sound* (23 February, 8pm, £5) and a workshop, *Healing And Harmonics* (24, 11am-5pm, £35). Oxon The Abbey, 01235 847401

QUATUOR ACCORDE +

POCO CLARINET TRIO

Improvising string quartet of Tony Wen, Mark Westell, Charlotte Hug and Phil Current with the clarinet duo of Alex Ward, Mindy Lee and Chris Cundy, who launch a new CD on Slam Records. London Red Rose Club, 6 February, 8pm, £5, 020 7253 7265. POCO also play London Sound 323, 23 February, 2pm, free, 020 8348 9595

RADIO TARIQA

Rich mixture of Tarrinco and Arabic traditional musics. London Royal Festival Hall (15 with Page Noel & Adam Poldoski), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (17), Leicester De Montfort Hall (18)

JOHN SURMAN & JACK DEJOHNETTE

WITH LONDON BRASS

The two jazz giants in a collaboration with the ten-piece brass ensemble featuring new music written by both soloists. Southampton Tarners Centre (3), Manchester Royal Northern College of Music (5), Birmingham Adnan Boult Hall (6)

DAVID THOMAS & TWO PALE BOYS

Pete Ube trombone and his mosaicque sidekicks, comedy on great Koro, York Fibbers (8

February), Barnet Bill Arts Centre (9), London Ocean 2 (28)

PAT THOMAS & TIM HALL

Improvising pianist and saxophonist in a series of duets entitled *Landscapes Of The Heart*. Oxon The Abbey, 14 February, 8pm, £5, 01235 847401

YANN TIERSEN: THE AMÉLIE

SOUNDTRACK Highlights from the celebrated French composer's soundtrack, alongside a selection of his other work. London Royal Festival Hall, 5 February, 7:30pm, £25/£15, 020 7960 4242, www.rfh.org.uk

KEITH TIPPETT & PETER FAIRCLOUGH

Freefloating jazz from the West Country pianist with former Mike Westbrook drummer Exeter Phoenix, 3 February, 8pm, £8/£5, 01392 667080

VOLCANO THE BEAR + MINUS

Leicester's surreal improvis-avant-folkies plus progressive Harbours from Iceland in a concert to be recorded for BBC Radio 3's *Mingus* It show. London Ocean 2, 11 February, free (tickets reserved in advance), 020 8533 0111

TRUMAN'S WATER

US upstate Beatnik-esque post-rockers returning to the UK supported by I'm Being Good, Ursa and The Keanes. London The Spirit, 4 February, 8pm, £6/£5, 020 7382 9032, www.spirit.co.uk

Club Spaces

AIRLIGHT

Weekly breakfast sessions, Marine Parade label party featuring Adam Freeland and Evil Nine (1

February), Lee Coombs (8), 103u1 (14), The Pump D's (22), Manchester Club North, Fridays, 10pm-3am, £8/£6, 0161 839 1989

ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL

Electronica, melodic flourishes and folk hooks at the new monthly residency. Similar on cicks and effects. Karsozzygraphers live and residents Nicks & Alex. London Embassy Bar, 8 February, 8pm-1am, £3 after 10pm, 020 7359 7682

BAGGAGE RECLAIM

Open-air mix of pop and experimentation. Solo extended saxophone meditations from John Butcher, "gently sinister English pop" from William O'Keefe, mechanical noise devices orchestrated by Robert Sierra, pop tunes on the occasion from Mike Adcock & Chae Bell and electro-crooning from MC Richard Sandersen. London 12 Bar, 24 February, 8pm, £6, 020 7916 6989, www.bagrec.com

BREAKIN' BREAD

HipHop monthly DJ Manpheat. The Big Giddy Funk 45 bag fest, guest breakdowns onces and resident DJs. London Jax, 9 February, 9pm-4am, £7-£3, 07887 647008, www.breakeast.org

CHILLI DOG

The Big Chill install themselves in Bruton for a weekly melow session. Residents Pete Lawrence and Lol Hammond are joined this month by Kirsty Hawkshaw (4), Rob Co Bank (11), Tom (18) and Bruce Bickerton (20). London Dog Star, Mondays, 9pm-2am, free, 020 7733 7515, www.dogstarbar.co.uk

DECONSTRUCT

Conwell's weekly foray into electronica, abstract breakbeats and modern urban jazz. Resident DJ Kingsley Marshall with Russ Jones (1 February), Kruse's Mark Blackburn (8), Ninja Tate's Loap Professor (15) and Zest Records' Hidden Agents

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National

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The indie nation's bible

GILLES PETERSDORF

Wednesday midnight-2am. Post-hard jazz

FABIO & GROOVERIDER

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WESTWOOD RAP SHOW

Friday 11pm-2am/Saturday 5pm-midnight

Hip-Hop flows

REGGAE DANCEHALL NITE

Saturday midnight-2am. Bass culture

BBC RADIO 3 90-93 FM

LATE JUNCTION

Monday-Thursday 10:15-midnight

New Music: compendium

JAZZ LEGENDS

Friday 4-5pm. Archive recordings

ANDY KERSHAW

Friday 10:15-11:30pm World Music

JAZZ ON 3

Friday 11:30pm-1am

Modern jazz in session and concert

WORLD ROUTES

Saturday 1-2pm

Lacy Durrant presents a knowledge of global music

JAZZ FILE

Saturday 6-8:30pm

Occasional magazine

HEAR AND NOW

Saturday 10:45pm-1am. New Music magazine

MIXING IT

Sunday 11pm-midnight

Hyper-electric mix of avant sounds

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95.5/103.9/104.5 FM, 855 MW

ON THE WIRE

Saturday 8-10pm. Steve Barker mixes it up worldwide

BBC MERSEYSIDE

95.8 FM, 1485 MW

PMS

Sunday midnight-2am. Eclectic mix of avant sounds

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FROM BEBOP TO HIPHOP

Wednesday 7:05-9pm, Sunday 10:05pm-midnight

Jazz and nu-bop

CABLE RADIO 89.8 FM

(MILTON KEYNES)

THE GARDEN OF EARTHLY DELIGHTS

Friday 10pm-midnight. Eclectic avant mix

KISS 100 FM (LONDON)

PATRICK FORGE

Sunday 10pm-midnight. Eclectic jazz-rol-jazz mix

FIRST AND HYPE

Sunday 3-5pm. Jungle

4 HERO

Monday 2-4am. Jazz Jangle, cyber soul, breakbeats

MATT JAM LAMONT

Wednesday 2-4am. More breakbeat science

LONDON LIVE 94.9 FM

SOLIO STEEL

Monday midnight-2am

Next moving from the Ninja Time mob

CHARLIE GILLET

Sunday 8-10pm. World Music, roots and R&B

RANKIN' MISS P. RIDDIMS & BLUES

Sunday 10pm-midnight. Strictly noisy

SURF 107 FM (BRIGHTON)

TOTALLY WIRE

Daily 11pm-1am. Leftfield independent/dance mix

XFM 104.9 (LONDON)

FLO-MOTION

Sunday 9pm-midnight. Leftfield electronica

(22). Tuso Mi Bat, Lomon Quay, Saturdays, Bpm onwards, free, 01326 373 593, www.deconstructivest.co.uk

DEFEKTE
Hip-hop and drum 'n' bass night. J4 live, Adam E, Steve, Shy Fly, 01 55 and more. London Mezz, 8 February, £8/£10 before 11pm/£10 after, 020 7337 1016

EAT YOUR OWN EGGS
Jazz Rude! label night with live Hip-hop from Dark Circle and local bass Scream playing an eclectic mix on the decks. London 93 Feet East, 16 February, 9pm-2am, £10/£8, 020 247 3293, www.93feeteast.co.uk

EXACULUM
This month's name for The Bohman Brothers' hip-hop space. Caroline Kraabel, Charlotte Hug & John Edwards join and Mark Westall & Phil Durant do it. Drpyth Rastell & Steve Noble also do. Kase Lambert & Adam Bohman do (11). LK Cozzini, Kait Aufmann, Steve Berenski & Sam Washington (10). Andrew Sparling & Rhodri Davies do it. Phil Weston also. Tom Clark and Friends (25). London upstairs at the Bessington Centre, Bpm, £4/£3, 01932 571323

FAVORITE LIVE
An A/B album launch with Howie B live plus Old John Peel, Ross Allen, Al B, James Laville, Plump, Fabio, Peshy, Adam F, DJ One, Kenny Ken, J Munk & West Magic (1 February), UNKLE, Scotch Perverts, Berrow & Temore live, Krust and Portishead's Geoff Barrow (3), Jazzerova, James Laville, Statens Warriors, Goozdevine, Roni Size and Fabio (15), Goozdevine, Distinctive Records, Hybrid live and Freq Nasty (22), London Fabric, 10pm-Sun, £12/£10, 020 7336 8996, www.london-fabric.com

THE INVISIBLE COLLEGE
Come on up for The Invisible College's 'Discrete You're Rusty' compilation, with Ozzy Osbourne and The Roots' dishing out rock, heavy soul and general weirdness. London Smeeth, 14 February, 8pm-midnight, www.londonrecords.com

KEEP IT UNREAL
The popular and eclectic Mr Scruff returns. London 93 Feet East, 8 February, 10pm-2am, £8 before 10pm/£10 after, 020 7247 3293, www.93feeteast.co.uk

KOSMISCHE
Wauwefield live, plus a DJ set from lean, sitting inside a Krautrock space. London Upstairs at the Garage, 23 February, 9pm-Sun, £6/£5, 020 7607 1818, www.kosmische.org

KLINKER
Longstanding off-the-wall improv club. Each night the month features a new type of club night with guest MCs. Confirmed at the time of going to press: Nigel Birch & The Flea Pit Orchestra, LK Cozzini & Mike Walter duo and New Rawkors (7). Phil Minson & Bob Cobbing, Yvonne Bastia with Willis, Roy Murphy No Goshes and Klinker fortune teller Cath (14), Free Bass 2 of Alan Wilkinson, Marco Martini & Steve Noble, The Nipple-less Tie and Yumi Hara (21), Ian Smith, Pat Thomas, Alan Ward & Troy Marsh Quartet, The Ghoues and Walking Wounded (22). These Records presents the Bermuda Triangle an evening of misdirection, disappearances of sound, film, hypnosis, poetry and somnambulation (28). London Sussex, Bpm, £4/£3, 020 8906 8216, www.klinkerclubnight.co.uk

NE
The Wip Records night returns with Christian Fennell, Wrentham Sisters, Global Goon, Mark

Bell from LFO, Mike Paradinas and Wip Old London Elektrowerk, 15 February, 11pm-Sun, £10, 020 837 6419, www.wiprecords.com

PLASTIC PEOPLE REGGAE NIGHTS
Sonic Studio and Lloyd Brown (1 February), Dennis Brown live in the Soul Jazz Sound System (8), Bobby Digital and Pete Holdsworth (15), Mark from Honest John's (22), Adam Sherwood live duo event featuring Ghetto Priest (1 March). www.plasticpeople.co.uk

SEEN
Horrible Records and iG presents Latin soul and electro baggaio with special guests IG Culture and resident DJs. Bristol level, 15 February, 9pm-2am, £7-£5, 0117 973 0473

THE SPRAWL
Valentine's Day special for the Internet bar monthly. Minimal laptop set from Edinburgh-based CK Dexter Haven plus Krautrock and psychedelia from DJ Jim Backhouse, and glitch, beats and krautrockers from residents Douglas Seaton and Br Tene. Visuals by Waveform. London Clifton Cafe, 14 February, 7.30pm-midnight, £4/£3, 0207 287 2242, www.dfsa.co.uk/sprawl/

STRUCTURE
Drum 'n' bass, Hip-hop and low end experimental breaks. Open & Roland, Rock Playford, Cahn, Rasca & Rone, Conspirator project, HAZE, USER, FACE, MC Shaydee, Olasestronk, Esst, Johnny Ransome, Stefan, Sean Mulvey and Lyle, London 93 Feet East, 19 January, 9pm-Sun, £5 before 10 pm/£10 after/£5 NUS, www.93feeteast.co.uk

VORTEX
Nightly jazz in a North London bar. This month's highlights include Gary Crosby's No Tuxo (2), Evan Parker trio (6), Anne Wineland (8) and Jon Lloyd Querner (16). London Vortex, 020 7254 6516

WORLD ROOTS
World music professor and Radio presenter Lucy Ousan hosts a new World Beat night along with Rita Ray and Max Reinhardt. London Market Place, 14 February and every second Thursday of the month, 9pm-1am, 020 7079 2020

Incoming

ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES USA

Rescheduled and enlarged Sonic Youth quartet festival, featuring Boredoms, Ron Asheton & The Stooges, Cemetery Of, David C, Tony Conrad, Silverstein, Stereolab, Some Youth, Jackie O Motherfucker, Ikon, Moe, Cecil Taylor, Peaches, Pita, Sister-Kimmy, Kevin Drumm, Leah Singer and many more. Los Angeles UCLA, 14-17 March, \$100, www.alltomorrowsparties.co.uk

ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES UK

Curated by Steve Allen and featuring Shellac, The Fall, Lou Tom Verlane, Melt Banana, Bonnie 'Prince' Billy, Wins, Zani Gena, The Breeders and others. Camber Sands Holiday Centre, 19-21 and 26-28 April, £100, www.alltomorrowsparties.co.uk

DON BYRON UK

New York clarinetist joins with a daytime programme for children, Rag Music For Juniors, and an evening programme for the grown ups. You Are! More Music For Six Musicians. Bristol

Artists (7 March), Kendal Brewery Arts Centre (8-9), Birmingham MCA (10-11), London Basement (12), Leeds The Warehouse (13), Mansfield Leisure Centre (14), Brighton Com Exchange (15), Southampton Turner Sims Concert Hall (16)

ANDREW CRONSHAW: ON THE SHOULDERS OF THE GREAT BEAR UK

A vivid evocation of the ancient myths of the frozen north, from Finland to Siberia, on a CMN tour sponsored by The Wire. Newcastle Playhouse (5 March), Olden Theatre Riding Stables (6), Backwell South Hill Park Arts Centre (8), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (9), London Queen Elizabeth Hall (10), Kendal Brewery Arts Centre (13). www.cmn.co.uk

DOMINO FESTIVAL BELGIUM

Annual festival of this year's Goodspeed York Music Empori, Do Make Say Think, DAI Politics, Lambrook and Mike Lead live, as well as DJ sets, label showcases, screenings and an exhibition of street art taken from The Wire's 2001 Invisible London expo. Brussels Ancienne Belgique, 19-21 April, www.webconcerts.be

ORBUQUES LU NIGHTS FRANCE

Good looking duo day festival featuring Michael Gurr, People Live Us, Jac Benoual, Bilestom from Bleedroom, Irm in Coleman & Kuma, John Oswald, Jim Thirwell & Jim Coleman, Fushkhead and more. Nantes La Live Union, 22-23 March, www.livemusic.com

ONLY CONNECT UK

London Barbican Centre's annual mix of new collaborations and special projects. Mainstage Festival with guests (10 March), John Zorn world premiere of The Gift (25), Main Music featuring Albi Baccini and Damon Albarn (26), Jon Hassell/Howie B/Saatchi Mazi (5 April), Craig Armstrong (20), Lu La Tene: The Sounds Of Science (20), Sugar Ritz & Hilmer Om Hillmanston: Olan's Raven Magic (21), Mouse On Mery, Col, Paid (27). London Barbican, times and prices vary, 020 7638 8891, www.barbican.co.uk/onlyconnect

OTHER MINDS FESTIVAL 6 USA

Three days of concerts and artist forums, featuring Lou Harrison, Pauline Oliveros, Ellen Fullman, Annea Lockwood and Richard Teitelbaum. San Francisco various venues, 7-9 March, 001 415 382 4400, www.otherminds.org

GARETH WILLIAMS MEMORIAL CONCERT

To mark the recent sudden passing of the former This Heat bandleader, a special concert including fellow This Heat members Charles Bullock and Charles Hayward, a reformer Mike plus friends and collaborators Vm Coningham, David Cunningham, Gareth Sgar, L Vag, plus special guests. London 93 Feet East, 7 March, Bpm, £12, 020 7247 3293, www.93feeteast.co.uk

Out There Items for inclusion in the March Issue should reach us by Friday 8 February. Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, info@londonmusic.co.uk. Do not send email listings as attachements. All listing information must include a contact phone number, start time and ticket price. Listings cannot be taken over the phone. □

London Musicians' Collective

registered charity number 252316

Beyond Pass Love [February 2002]

A [Live concert at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1, Friday February 15th 2002 at 7pm.

Live music in two halls from Alan Wilkerson & Steve Nichols, Neil Brand & Phil Dorrans & Paul Hood & Dennis Dubois & Modulus & Noze Flamenco & Phil Aston and more! Bar & product stall

RESONANCE VOLUME 9.2 THE FERRARI ISSUE [March 2002]

Magazine & CD by Kurt Auerman, Nicky Collins, Phil Dorrans, Rob Flett, Alvin Lucier, David Lee Myers, Tommy's Nakamura, Barry Nichols, Michael Prime, Mark Roggipoly, David Taylor & John Cage, Xenotos

RESONANCE PM 2002 [April 2002]

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All subscribers get discounts on Back Issue orders (see page 69), *Wire* merchandise, and mail order offers on selected CDs and music books

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If you take out a new subscription this month, we will also send you a copy of *Sample This*, a new and exclusive compilation from the Chicago Hefty label which was given away to all subscribers with this month's issue (see the inside back cover)



With last month's issue, *The Wire's* cover price went up to £3.30. But we are holding our subscription rates at their current levels for the next two issues.
Beat the price increase. Subscribe to *The Wire* online at www.thewire.co.uk
Or use the form on page 89

The Wire Tapper series

The *Wire Tapper* is a unique and ongoing series of CDs that are compiled by *The Wire* staff and given away exclusively to all our subscribers worldwide with selected issues of the magazine.

Each CD is designed to function as an audio accompaniment to the kind of eclectic, wide-ranging mix of new and underground music that gets featured in the pages of *The Wire* each month. Vols 1-5 and Vols 7 and 8 (the most recent volume in the series) are single CDs; Vol 6 is a 30 track double CD which was compiled to celebrate the publication of *The Wire's* 200th issue in October 2000.

If you take out a new subscription now you can opt to receive one of three free introductory packages, two of which include previous volumes in *The Wire Tapper* series – you choose which option suits you (see opposite for details)

NB Subscribers can also get copies of all previous volumes in *The Wire Tapper* series with Back Issue orders (see page 80)

THE WIRE TAPPER 1

THE WIRE IN
APRIL 1998 ISSUE 130

[illegible]

THE WIRE TAPPER 3

**THE WINE IS
HOWEVER LESS RED.**

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THE WIRE TAPPER 5

APRIL 1998 VOL 25 / NO 4

SUPERHEROES "I'M HIGH LIKE 'GADAM' BEHIND FROM DANNY" WE HEARD SAS JUSTICE TO PROCEED BUT "THE JONES ANIMAL" INQUIRYTON MOORELYVEN PARKERWILKES PUL-
"CRUISE" SPINEL "NO" "NO" AND "GAY" PANGOL NEW KILIAN SHAMMA "YES" "YES" "YES" "YES"
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THE WIRE TAPPER 5

MARCH 2006 ISSUE 3

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THE WIRE TAPPER 2

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CD-4

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THE WIRE TAPPER 2

MAY 2008-2009: 2007

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THE WIRE TAPPER 8

JANUARY 2000 ISSUE

[illegible]

More free music...

In addition to The Wire Tapper series, we regularly collaborate with a variety of labels and organizations to produce special CDs which are given away exclusively to all subscribers worldwide with selected issues of the zine. For example, if you had been subscribing to the magazine over the last 12 months, you would have received free copies of the CDs listed opposite (NB of these CDs and more are still available to subscribers with Black Issue orders. See page 89). forthcoming CDs in this exclusive subscriber series include new compilations from Kid606's Tugboat label, Belgium's Domino festival plus the second volume of Blackout's *Right in the Wire*.



Straubold (Straubold)



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Summary



Dear Mr. A. Stier

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Label Lore

No: 065 Smalltown Supersound

Address
 PO Box 2069, Gruenelikka 0506, Oslo, Norway
 info@smalltownsupersound.com
 www.smalltownsupersound.com

Distribution
 Pervale (UK), Sirefina (USA), Lowlands (Belgium),
 Chronosave (France), Indigo (Germany), UME
 (Scandinavia)

Run by
 Joakim Haglund

Roster includes
 Kim Hortby, Jazzkammer, Jaga Jazzet, Alexander
 Reibow, Lasse Mathiasen, Eirikre Nasa, Martin
 Hornbæk, Ste Dupermon and Monopel

Brief history
 When I was 17 and living in Røskilde, Norway I
 released tapes by friends. When I moved to Oslo the
 operation became more serious with vinyl and CD
 releases. I soon made contact with new artists,
 venues and booking agents, and based on this
 network I created the profile and style of the label

Statement of intent
 To have a broad, yet distinct stylistic foundation with
 an emphasis on continuity in both sound and
 design. Many of the artists are personal friends, and
 in many ways Smalltown Supersound works as a
 collective

Other activities
 Smalltown Supersound is in charge of the concert
 series NO at the Bill venue in Oslo (co-hosted by
 The Wire) and we are currently working on a larger
 festival in June

Future plans
 New albums by Jaga Jazzet, Kim Hortby, Monopel,
 Alexander Reibow and a Kinn Drum/Lasse
 Mathiasen collaboration album.
 There will also be a label sampler, Smalltown
 Supersound 1. There is a new Smalltown
 Supersound logo and the Website is due for a
 re-design. In March there will be a Smalltown
 Supersound US tour with Kim Hortby (DJ)
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 info@smalltownsupersound.com



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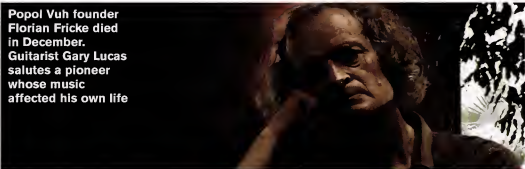
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Epiphanies

**Popol Vuh founder
Florian Fricke died
in December.
Guitarist Gary Lucas
salutes a pioneer
whose music
affected his own life**



Florian Fricke pictured recently in Munich

PHOTO COURTESY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The camera swoops godlike through the clouds, zooming in on a line of Spanish conquistadors thronging their way carefully down a Peruvian mountainside, like a line of soldier ants. In the 8th Street Playhouse in Manhattan's West Village, I sit crouched in the darkness, spellbound by this celluloid spectacle, my ears filled with the sound of a heavenly choir chanting a wordless, dirge-like hymn to what sounds like the darkest forces of Nature, a hymn that soars to the peaks of the Andes, shaking the rafters of the cinema. Underpinning the awesome majesty of this hypnotic vocalese is a mournful minimalist guitar figure that repeats insistently in a kind of tidal ebb and flow, at one with the angelic swirling soundscape. The year is 1978. The film is *Agave*, *The Wrath Of God*. I am about to have my eyes forced wide by the genius of director Werner Herzog. And my ears opened forever by the ineffable beauty of the music of Florian Fricke and his group Popol Vuh.

I have come to treasure every soundtrack Fricke supplied for the spiritual visions of Herzog (as in all: *Agave*, *The Enigma Of Kaspar Hauser*, *Nosferatu*, *Heart Of Glass*, *Fitzcarraldo* and *Cobra Verde*). The man seemed born specifically for the role of translating Herzog's mysterious Weltanschauung into the most brilliant, heartstopping film music ever. It is at once medieval and modern, sacerdotal and worldly, an aura of incense mingling with the poisoned perfume of Herzog's garden of unearthly delights.

Realising the group formed an important chapter I'd somehow missed in the Krautrock saga, the soundtracks prompted me to seek out as many pre-Herzog Popol Vuh releases as I could. At that point I was fairly well versed in the German Progressive music canon, but Florian Fricke and his shadowy, mystical group Popol Vuh (their name derived from the creation story of the Quiché Maya) had eluded me — up until that fateful screening.

Originally a trio, Popol Vuh were founded in 1969 by former music critic Fricke, the classically trained son of an opera singer, in Munich. In 1970 the group could boast the first ever German usage of the mighty Moog III. Oddly enough, they began their performing career with well received appearances in 1971 on the formerly British music dominated TV programme *Beat Club*.

Popol Vuh's 1970 synth classic *Affenstunde* (literally *How Dr The Monkeys* — perhaps a prophetic prod to Werner Herzog for the ending of his *Agave* film), featured the original great trio line-up of Fricke on Moog, Holger Trulzsch on percussion and Frank Fiedler

on synth and midtown. Since that first album, Popol Vuh have gone on to release nearly 30 official albums, remises and compilations, on vinyl and CD (*Affenstunde* alone has been rereleased in eight different configurations on myriad labels worldwide).

With its spacious, glowing music, played on a bastardised church organ and retrofitted with tape loops of voices and other instruments, including a homemade Mellotron-like instrument, *Agave*'s transcendental main title theme, "Lacarne Di Re" ("The Tears Of The King"), remains for many the eternal Florian Fricke calling card. But for me his greatest, most numinous composition is his opening-title music to Herzog's 1978 recreation of Mumau's silent vampire classic, *Nosferatu* — a piece known as "Höre, Der Du Wagt" ("Listen, You Who Dare!"), which plays as the camera lingers on opened sepulchres, their mummified contents beckoning and grimaicing in a rictus of death.

These two Fricke themes — among the finest film music ever composed — so burned themselves into my brain that I felt compelled, commanded, even, by some unknown spurt to cover them on solo guitar, in my own style, on two of my own albums. I recorded both pieces at home, live in my living room, on an extremely gloomy, snowbound whitout of a late afternoon winter's day, in an absolute trance. Fricke's music has, and continues to exert, a profound effect on me.

The excellent 1993 *Best Of Popol Vuh CD* compilation on Milan contains excerpts of most of the best bits from all the Herzog films, plus some more of their "greatest hits", and is heartily recommended to all Popol Vuh beginners. It includes the main title music from *Fitzcarraldo*, whose Orff-like feverish choir and over the top bass percussion will give your neighbour a heart attack, if you crank it up loud enough. But after this, I most favour the early music of the primal, pre-acoustic Popol Vuh trio, particularly their second album, *In Den Gärten Pharaos* (In The Gardens Of Pharaoh). Fricke, Fiedler and Trulzsch seamlessly meld the natural sounds of lapping water, eerie sci-fi electro-shrieks and theemem quavers, and assorted Trulzsch percussion into an audio vortex, a whirling maelstrom of spacy ethnic-sounding passages, some of which got recycled in *Nosferatu*.

Even better is in *In Den Gärten*'s side two: the 19 minute "Vuh", recorded live in a cathedral in Baumburg, Bavaria, where Fricke holds his own in a monochordal trance-out jam with startling affinities to The Velvet Underground's epochal "Sister Ray". Like

John Cale, Florian keeps the superior firepower of his organ in reserve, choosing his moments carefully to surprise and overtake his conferees in a Sur-Tzu kind of strategy. The 1983 CD reissue of *In Den Gärten* on Celestial Harmonies adds the *Agave* theme to the package and closes with a breathtaking solo piano meditation by Fricke entitled "Spirit Of Peace", which seems to emanate from some other realm. Florian Fricke was definitely hotwired to the cosmos — it's delicate and dreamy without succumbing to any nambypamby Windham Hill horseshit. The real New Age starts here.

And thus we come to 1973's *Selbstpreisung* (*Beatitudes*), and 1974's *Einsdger & Siebenjdger*, both Kosmische Music releases. For many, these are the classic Popol Vuh albums. They're coiled, devotional mantras that unwind with inexorable logic; in the best Prog tradition, their numerous movements, time changes and harmonic shifts climax grandly or merely splutter out in media res.

With texts drawn from St Matthew's Gospel, the former album delineates Fricke's esemplastic spirit if nothing else; and the latter codifies the most rockist phase of Popol Vuh, with Daniel Fichelscher's ragga-guitar heroics to the fore. Eastern music was a constant throughout Fricke's career: In 1976, for instance, he recorded an album called *Yoga* with a number of Indian musicians.

His subsequent recordings introduced a kinder, gentler sound palette, often bringing in sacred texts and employing ethnic instrumental combinations. He never totally abandoned his electronic roots, and his later 90s albums included loops, drum machine beats and found sounds. Still, the acoustic piano beckoned — in 1990 he actually released a solo album devoted to Mozart, played straight on a Bösendorfer.

Sadly, Florian Fricke died on 29 December at his home in Munich, following a stroke that befell him just before Christmas. A three volume trilogy of past work is still in the planning stages; however, the final album of this, a remix/reissue entitled *Future Sound Experience*, has just been released on Mystic Records. But to hell with titles, provenance, reutilisation/ recycling of the past in the continuum of Fricke's oeuvre. It's the spectral (truly a justified adjective here) ability of this haunting music to blur the boundaries of time and space that makes me mourn the tragic loss the world of music has suffered with his untimely death. □ Florian Fricke, musician, composer, born 23 February 1944, died 29 December 2001

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This month



With this month's issue of *The Wire*, all subscribers worldwide received a free copy of *Sample This*, an exclusive compilation from the Chicago Hefty label

The Hefty label is a vital component in Chicago's sonic underworld, issuing records which connect the city's vibrant post-rock and electronica communities with its history as a centre for freewheeling avant jazz. Specially compiled for *The Wire*, and given away to all the magazine's subscribers this month, *Sample This* is an exclusive compilation featuring 13 tracks lifted from the label's recent releases by Teflon Tef Aviv, Slicker, Phil Ranelin, Beneath Autumn Sky, John Hughes, Twine, Savath+Savalas, Retna.It, The Aluminium Group and Samadha Trio. For more information on the Hefty label, go to www.heftyrecords.com

Next month



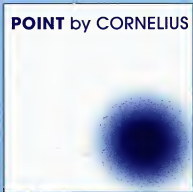
With next month's issue of *The Wire*, all subscribers worldwide will receive a free copy of an exclusive compilation marking this year's Domino festival

Organised and hosted by Brussels's Ancienne Belgique venue, the annual Domino festival is now an established node on Europe's new music network. In the words of the organisers: "Musically we search outside the margins of today's pop music. In music terms: avant-hop, turntablism, clicks + cuts, alternative Country, drum 'n' bass, electronica; basically acts/artists that have their own identity..." The line-up for this year's event, which takes place between 10-21 April, includes Godspeed You Black Emperor!, Do Make Say Think, DAT Politics, Lambchop and Mike Ladd, as well as two nights of Belgian electronica, label showcases, video screenings and an exhibition of sleeve art culled from *The Wire*'s 2001 Invisible London expo. To mark the festival, the organisers have compiled a special 15 track CD, featuring contributions from Carnival Ox, King Tubby, Frigido, Do Make Say Think, Le Tigre and others, which will be given away exclusively to all *The Wire*'s subscribers with the March 2002 issue. Full details of the CD and festival will be included in next month's issue. In the meantime, for more information on Domino go to www.abconcerts.be

Sample This and *Domino* are the latest instalments in an ongoing series of CDs which are specially produced for *The Wire* and given away to all the magazine's subscribers worldwide. These CDs are only available to subscribers, and are not on sale with the magazine in the shops. If you are not yet a subscriber you can still get your hands on copies of both CDs by taking out a new subscription to *The Wire* this month. Just turn to page 96 or go to www.thewire.co.uk

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